

Where to find God's Blessing

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- [0 : 0 0] Amen to that. Let me ask you, if you can, turn to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1.
- 1 Thessalonians chapter 1.
- Therefore, we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith, in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.
- 1 Thessalonians chapter 1.
- Let's pray.
- [2 : 5 6] 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1.
- that we would have ears to hear and hearts that would be receptive to your words to us. Too often we are more concerned with our words to you and our will in the world.
- But this morning, Father God, may we take the time to be realigned with your purposes. And may we take the time, or use this time, for you to speak to us in a way that is clear and direct without any misunderstanding.
- Would your blessing be upon us this day, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. One of the great things about 2 Thessalonians, I'm sorry, got out eventually.
- 2 Thessalonians is the sense of reassurance you get from reading the letter. More importantly, the reassurance you have from reading this letter is not a selfish reassurance.
- [4 : 0 3] For the simple reason, Christians who are persecuted, not you, but Christians who are actually persecuted on account of their Christian faith, we are reassured that God is protecting them now and that God will do what is right always for them.
- Now this is wonderful and beautiful at the same time. For us, as we read 2 Thessalonians, God has a wonderful way here of refocusing our faith on our calling.
- Too often, we turn to God to decide what we want to do. And too often, our prayers to God are simply guidance for what we want to do and what we want to happen.
- And what 2 Thessalonians does is it removes that misunderstanding by allowing you to see what God is concerned with, what God is concerned about, and of course, what God wants you to be concerned about.
- Paul is reassuring the Christians here at Thessalonica, and he's reassuring us about Christians who are persecuted, that God is with those in their suffering.
- [5 : 1 7] But this suffering is an illness. It's not the suffering you have for when perhaps you go into a hospital with a poorly stomach, or a bad head, or a broken leg, or a particular internal illness that you have.
- No, this suffering is directly on account of you being a Christian. Now, of course, a person can end up in a hospital in this country for a multitude of reasons.

But I doubt very much that a Christian would end up in a hospital in this country because they are a Christian. But you only have to look throughout the world, and you can see people who need supreme medical care because they are Christians, because they have been afflicted, persecuted, and suffered on account of them actually being a Christian.

And so, while you may not feel the reassurance that comes from this letter this morning because you are not one who is being afflicted because you are a Christian, this is why the reassurance is not a selfish reassurance.

You are able to be reassured for others in the fact that brothers and sisters who are suffering because they are a Christian in this world that you know from this letter this morning that God is with them, giving them enduring faith, and giving them the grace to deal with what they suffer.

[6 : 43] But at the same time, this letter is for us, reassuring us that if it ever did come our way, then God would be there for us as well.

So notice that this letter produces reassurance, but it's not one of selfish concern. It allows us to think of all of those who are afflicted on account of being a Christian.

In other words, it is the reassurance that causes brotherly love amongst the church. This same kind of reassurance that Paul gives here, he gives to all Christians throughout generations because all Christians are going to suffer at some point on account of being a Christian.

The reason it doesn't happen here so much is not because it's not happening, but it's just because there's not enough Christians on the front line where the battle is actually taking place.

Christians do suffer in this nation. They suffer consequentially with governance and political laws and so forth and so on. But it's such a negligent suffering because everyone is suffering in the same way because of those ungodly decisions.

[7 : 59] But true suffering on account of being a Christian happens to those who are at the very front where Christianity is either seen as a threat or it is misunderstood or whatever the case may be that people would persecute a Christian just for being a Christian.

Jesus said that these things would not be avoided. The question then is a fairly simple one. How can a letter like this be applicable to us if we're not being persecuted in this particular way?

Well, for two reasons. One, it allows you to be concerned and encouraged and reassured that Christians who are being persecuted in this way are being protected by God.

Secondly, what this letter will do it will refocus you on what your calling is as a believer. As I said, too many of our prayers focus on what we want God to do for us.

But what this letter does is it refocuses our attention. So let's look at the summary as we go through these 12 verses. I don't want to overlook the greeting because in the greeting we recognize how the blessings of God are communicated from God to us.

[9 : 16] I don't know if you've ever asked the question as you've sat at home or come to church if God's telling me that he is going to bless me how does it get from him to me? If God is going to bless me with grace and with mercy and with multitude other blessings how do those blessings get from God to me?

And we saw it this morning. The blessings are communicated by God from God to us through prayer through his word through the sacraments in the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

And so what we have here is the church being reminded in the greeting that Paul, Silvanus and Timothy are in God in exactly the same way the Christians in Thessalonica are in God.

and the grace and peace that is coming to them verse 2 the grace and peace to you from God is a grace and peace that is communicated in the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Now God the Holy Spirit is not mentioned directly but he is mentioned because he is the vehicle he is the one who communicates those blessings to the church.

[10 : 29] so the church is blessed with the blessings of God as they are communicated through his word through prayer through the sacraments by the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

So if you are seeking God's blessing I want you to understand where it comes from. I want you to understand where it turns up where the true blessing of God can actually be found.

And it is in the places where God has put it. Paul then moves on quite quickly in verse 3 with a measure of thankfulness that shows the necessity to be thankful.

He is writing to Christians who are suffering and the Christians that are suffering can be boasted about because they are doing so in a way where their faith is enduring.

They are afflicted they are persecuted but Paul was able to boast about them because they are not moving in their Christian conviction. This is a far cry I think from what we experience about Christianity here.

[11 : 43] You only need the latest trend to turn up on TV or to make its way on the internet or wherever it may be and all of a sudden Christians are chasing after it.

The idea of steadfastness seems to be missing because Christians because Christians may not recognize where they are actually to stand and what they are to stand for.

And of course if you stand for nothing you will fall for everything. So what 2 Thessalonians lays out is the thing with clarity what you are to stand for as a Christian.

Christian. Paul then goes on to say something which is quite striking in verse 5 that the suffering that they feel verse 5 is the evidence of the righteous judgment of God.

That God considers that the suffering you go through not only necessary but right because it is the very thing that God uses to make you perfect in Christ Jesus.

[12 : 52] And I want to say to God why can't you do it another way? Why can you not make my faith strong in you in another way?

Now the only way I can possibly explain this in a simple way that you could get immediately is back in the day I wanted to be a boat builder. And I can remember as a very young boy being taken down to the boat sheds by my granddad and he would put a block in my hand wrap the block with sandpaper and get me to sand one piece of timber and sand it for hours.

Hours and hours. And I couldn't see the benefit of this of doing the same thing in the same place over and over and over and over and over again.

Until he took my hand and rubbed it across a rough piece and then across the smooth piece. you get to you end up with fine pieces of furniture and beautiful looking boats made of timber when you do the same thing over and over and over again.

In other words you can't arrive at perfection through going over it once. You can't arrive at perfection through doing something just once.

[14 : 15] So the repetition that a Christian goes through is necessary because it's God's way of perfecting us in him. This is one of the points that is necessary here with the righteous judgment that we go through.

But then Paul doesn't overlook the fact or rather reminds us that God does not overlook the fact that those who persecute Christians will one day face the judgment of God. And those Christians who are persecuted will one day receive relief from their persecutors because Jesus Christ will return and as he returns the persecution will end.

And the judgment of God is upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel. And so what you see here is that God is removing all misunderstanding.

He's not just giving us understanding. He is removing misunderstanding because there will always be those in the church and those within the world who will think well I know God I believe in God therefore I'm safe.

And God really won't go through with his words will he? So what is made clear here is that the judgment of God falls upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel.

[15 : 40] All misunderstanding is removed saved by allowing us to see this in its double form. God will deal with those who are not saved and those who are not saved are those who are the ones who are persecuting Christians.

Not all of course but some. Paul goes on to say then in verse 10 that we do not believe in vain as a Christian but we remember that God is making us worthy of the calling that we have received.

Do you feel worthy to live the Christian life? Are you worthy of it? No. It is an absolute blessing and gift of God to you to be a Christian.

You don't deserve it. You don't deserve anything. Everything is an act of God's grace towards you. Freely given to you in Christ Jesus.

You don't deserve answers to your prayers. You don't deserve blessings. You don't deserve any of it. And yet we belong to a God who freely bestows these blessings upon us constantly, daily, without fail.

[16 : 57] His mercies are new every morning. Two mistakes can be made here. One, that you think you have to be good to get God's blessings.

Two, that you think you deserve them. Both are untrue. You don't deserve them and you don't have to work to get them. They are freely given to you in Christ Jesus.

Why? So that Christ may be glorified in us and us in him. That's how Paul finishes his first chapter. That Christ may be glorified. In other words, the sum total of your Christian life, as God sees it, is for his son to be glorified in you and for you to be glorified in him.

And I want to say, yeah, but I want to be a professional tennis player. Or I want to do this. I want to build a business. I want to be this. I want to be rich. I want to have lots of knowledge. I want the sum total of your Christian life in the eyes of God is not for you to be any of those things or have any of those things, but rather for Christ to be glorified in you and for you to be glorified in Christ.

And that is the best possible result that you could even want yourselves. Too often though, we don't want it. It's a bit like children. I don't know if you've ever noticed with children.

[18 : 21] I can remember saying to my children, we're going to go here today. And because they can't imagine what it will be like, they want to stay where they are. So I say, we're going to go to this place and we're going to do this and we're going to do that.

And whatever is going on in their little head, they can't imagine what it's like. And so they say, I don't want to go, I don't want to go, I don't want to go. And so you're waiting around for two or three hours and eventually you go.

And when you get there and they realize how good it is, what's the next thing they say to you? Why didn't we come earlier? Why can't we stay longer? Right?

And that's what it's like with the blessings of God and glorification in Christ Jesus. When you get it, you wondered why it took you so long to get it in the first place. And when you have it, you never want it to end.

But we are all like that young child where we think that what is out in the world is better and more interesting than what God actually has for us in Christ Jesus.

[19 : 25] Right? It's like you are all like children out in the garden making mud pies. when God has offered you the biggest possible blessing and because you can't imagine it with your mind and believe it in your heart, you don't want to go.

And when you get there eventually by the grace of God, you wonder why it took you so long. Two points then, really short points in many ways.

The first is this, there are reasons to be reassured as a Christian. Being a Christian is hard work. Being a Christian is a difficult life even when you're not being persecuted.

And one might even say that if you were persecuted for your faith, it might focus your attention so well that you would live the Christian life better. Because you would be able to see the clear distinctions between that which is valuable and that which is fallen.

But in this world where we are in the West, those distinctions are just diluted because the strongest temptations that we have are normally down to pleasure and the strongest attractions are normally down to pleasure as well, not suffering.

[20 : 48] Now here's the main point. If you don't believe as a Christian sat here this morning that Christ and the gospel will overcome the world and those in the world, if you don't believe that, then your whole Christian life will be one of compromise.

If you don't believe sat here this morning that Christ and the gospel will overcome the world and those in the world, your Christian life will be full of compromises.

And what those compromises look like is this, if I can't beat them, I'll join them. If I can't beat the world, I'll join the world.

If I can't have what I want my way in God, I'll try and have what I want in the world. It's the classic old, if I can't beat them, I'll join them.

So those who don't believe that Christ will overcome the world and overcome everything that is ungodly and everything that is not righteous, then you will end up being committed to those things because you'll think there's no alternative.

[22 : 06] You will be committed to those things because you think there's no way of overcoming them. If I can't beat them, I'll join them. Unless you are convinced that that which is righteous and just is able to overcome the fallen world that we live in, unless you're convinced of that, you are not going to be committed to the things of God as you should be.

And compromises range wildly. Everything from relationships, one of the basic compromises is when a believer marries an unbeliever, which staggers me that the Christian church is not on their knees when this happens, especially when we read that the judgment comes upon those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel.

Do you understand the future for that relationship? What about working relationships? What about business life? What about family life? Do you understand how easy it is for these compromises to creep into the church and to creep into the Christian life when you are not convinced that Jesus Christ and the gospel will overcome the world and those in the world?

your life is nothing more than if I can't beat them, I will join them. And this is the very thing that undermines the very steadfastness that marks these Christians out here.

We may not think that joining the world is leaving our steadfastness. Christians and that's possibly because you don't know where you need to be standing as a Christian.

[23 : 49] Do you understand where Christ wants you to stand? Do you understand what Christ wants you to stand for? Do you understand that the steadfastness that you are called to is so that you would reflect the calling that God has given to you?

And the reason is because God does not want you to be compromised. and so he reassures you that the faith that he gives you and the grace and the peace that he gives you is enabling and enables you to remain steadfast and sure within the Christian faith.

And the way God does this, the way he creates steadfastness in his people, is through righteous judgment. He uses tribulations, he uses sufferings, he uses afflictions directly because you are a Christian as a way of making you steadfast.

Because every time you are afflicted because you're a Christian, you have a choice. And the choice is, do I hide in the crowd or do I stand where I am?

Do I hide in the crowd or do I stand where I am? Every time, it doesn't matter how small the affliction, the question that you are being presented with, is a very simple one.

[25 : 11] Do I stand where I am for Christ on account of being a Christian or do I fall into the crowd because if I can't beat them, I'll join them. So unless you know where you are to stand, you cannot possibly remain steadfast.

Unless you know what God has actually given you, what he's actually called you to be, you will not know where to plant your feet. you will not know where to stand.

God creates steadfast in us by enabling us to go through sufferings, by giving us the faith, the grace, and the peace, the enduring faith, so that we would recognize and be a heart full of conviction that Christ and his gospel will overcome the world and everyone in it.

peace. Here's the second thing. Why is that so important? It's important because the final judgment will come.

I don't know about you, but I want justice. I have a fascination, though I've not read a lot, I've read a couple of books on the subject, but I have a book on my shelf at home, of a British man in an American prison who did not commit the crime that he's in prison for.

[26 : 41] Now, I can't go into the whole book to explain why didn't they just let him out because it's much more complicated than that. I also read another story of a man who was incarcerated in America for 37 years for a crime he didn't commit, and he was set free by DNA evidence 37 years later.

And your heart, when you hear a story like that, just rejoices. And the reason it rejoices is because you love justice.

you love for what is right to be presented and true and to be manifested. And when you're in heaven, you will be so perfect, so righteous, that you will agree that what your unbelieving friend has in eternal destruction is right.

I want you to understand that, that if you've got friends who are unbelievers, that when you're in heaven and they are facing the final judgment and eternal destruction, you will be so righteous in Christ that you will understand that what is happening to them is just and true.

And that is what our heart cries out for, that what we seek when we look at wrong doing is justice. justice. And so the final judgment is where justice will be finally complete.

[28 : 18] Those who persecute Christians will not get away with it. Those who do not know God will face eternal damnation. Those who do not obey the gospel will face eternal destruction.

Now, of course, there's a clear distinction being made here between the two people. the Jews, as you know, were one of the first groups to persecute the church. Paul, who wrote this letter, was a persecutor of the church.

Paul was a Jew. Paul knew God. But at the time when Paul was Saul persecuting the church, he did not obey the gospel. But upon his conversion, not only did he then know God, but he also obeyed the gospel.

And this is the distinction that is being made here, that we would understand that the judgment of God is not just upon those who do not know God, but it's even upon those who know God and do not obey the gospel.

What is Paul doing? Well, not only is he giving us understanding, he is removing any misunderstanding. Because it is tempting for Christians to think, well, if it's not been said, then perhaps it's not true.

[29 : 33] Or if it's not been said, then perhaps I can get away with it. Perhaps God won't actually go through with his word. No, Paul wants to make clear. And he does so by giving us understanding and by removing misunderstanding.

But the main point here is that it is right and just for those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel to face the judgment.

God will God will not be fair with those in the world.

So know where you stand and know why you stand where you do. And be reassured that in Christ, God will enable your feet to remain steadfast and true in him.

Here's the exhortation then as we close. The one thing that God is doing in your Christian life is making you worthy of what you have received in Christ Jesus.

[30 : 40] The faith that you have received is not passive but active. It enables you to stand fast. It enables you to do good works for Christ. But if you do not believe or you are not convinced down to the very core of your being that Christ and his gospel will overcome the world, then your life is an open door to compromise.

Because what you're effectively saying is, if I can't beat the world, I'll join the world. But when you are convinced that Christ and his gospel overcomes it, triumphs over the world, then you're on the winning side.

You're on the side of triumph. You're on the side of success. You're on the side of blessing. You're on the side of what is true, beautiful, and good. It's not just about being right.

It's about being beautiful, good, righteous, holy, steadfast. God. And so the calling that God is making of your life this very morning is that whatever you go through, you go through it with God.

And the reason you go through it is because God is making you worthy of the gift that he has given you in Christ Jesus. And the only time where you become less steadfast than what you are right now is when you lose the conviction that what you are in Christ and what Christ has accomplished and what the gospel is still accomplishing will not overcome the world.

[32 : 24] If you are not convinced that Christ has won the victory, that Christ triumphs over all, then you will end up living a life of compromise.

Rather, know where you ought to stand, know why you stand there, and know that in Christ he reassures you that he will give you the grace and the peace and the mercy and everything that you need to remain steadfast and sure because that is what God wants for you so that you may be glorified in him and Christ in you.

So I'll finish with this. The sum total and purpose of your Christian life as seen by God is that your life would bring glory to Jesus and that Christ in you will be glorified.

Amen. The Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[33 : 41] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.