

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/2thess/2thess-1/2-thessalonians-111-12/>

Paul prays for the Thessalonians to continue to endure through suffering, so that God will count them worthy of the coming Kingdom, and reward them accordingly. They should persist in faithful obedience and bring honor to Christ by living out the goodness and favor of God, because this is the path to their greatest fulfillment as God's creations.

Paul is encouraging the Thessalonians to continue to endure persecution. When Jesus returns, He will punish those who did not put their faith in Him, those who afflicted believers, and reward those who endured faithfully.

To this end also, Paul writes, we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power. The phrase *this end* refers to the prior verses, which speak of enduring persecution, and being found faithful upon Jesus's return, receiving the great rewards Jesus has for those who endure as faithful witnesses.

Paul here does not pray for the Thessalonians to be spared difficulty, but rather that *our God will count you worthy of your calling*. Rather than pray for improved circumstances, Paul prays that God will *fulfill every desire* the Thessalonians have to pursue *goodness*. This is similar to what Paul tells the Philippians:

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”
(Philippians 4:8)

In this Philippians passage, Paul tells his children in the faith to dwell on things that are good. In 2 Thessalonians 1:11 Paul prays that God will *fulfill every desire* they have *for goodness*.

Also, Paul prays that the Thessalonians will have *power* to complete every *work of faith*. Apparently if the Thessalonians have their *desire for goodness* fulfilled and the power to complete works *of faith*, it would be a sign that God counted them *worthy of their calling*. By extension, this might mean that if God only gives believers comfortable circumstances, it would mean He has not found them *worthy of their calling*. Perhaps He is letting these comfort-seekers be like Esau, who was really hungry, and traded his birthright for a bowl of stew. This stew satisfied Esau, and made him comfortable in the moment, only to be remorseful long after, when he realized his great loss of inheritance (Hebrews 12:16-17). He was still loved by his father. He was still his father's son. But he had lost his inheritance.

Believers can lose the reward of the inheritance by seeking the comforts of this world, rather than living in all things to honor God and enduring rejection by the world. Throughout his letters, Paul exhorts His children in the faith to endure in faithful obedience to Christ, and do all things with a motive to please God (Philippians 3:7-8,14-15). It is in this way we gain the reward of the inheritance (Colossians 3:23). The process by which we endure faithfully, learning from mistakes and growing day by day, is the process Paul calls sanctification.

The will of God is for our sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3). We are called to endure persecution and rejection by the world, and overcome the world, just as Jesus overcame it (John 16:33, Revelation 3:21). We will be counted *worthy* when Jesus fulfills *every desire* we have *for goodness*. When we pursue what is truly good, we can expect opposition and rejection by the world. We are also counted *worthy* when God allows us to accomplish works *of faith with power*. God has called us to walk in fellowship with Him, where we are daily serving Him through faith as sacrificial servants (Romans 12:1).

This paradoxical relationship between our choices and God's is found throughout scripture. In this chapter, Paul prays that God would accomplish good works in his spiritual children, which involves God's choices, while also exhorting the Thessalonians to continue to make good choices.

Paul says something similar in his letter to the Ephesians:

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them”
(Ephesians 2:10)

In this verse from Ephesians, Paul paradoxically calls on his spiritual children to make a choice to do good deeds that Jesus has already prepared beforehand. This is beyond our human comprehension, which Paul acknowledges in his writings:

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”
(Romans 11:33)

But Paul does not try to “figure out” God. He begins with God. That is the approach used in the entire Bible. The scripture starts with the phrase “In the beginning God.” This is also paradoxical from our perspective as creatures, in that God was there before the beginning. God Himself is paradoxical, as reflected in His chosen name, “I Am.” God describes Himself as “existence.” That is also beyond our comprehension. Although God is paradoxical, and His ways are paradoxical, they also fit with our experience, since all things reflect God, as He is the maker of all things (Psalm 19; Colossians 1:16-17).

Human reasoning always has to begin with a definition, a starting spot. As in math, which begins with an axiom. And in math, sometimes axioms conflict, and still work, as with Euclidian and non-Euclidian geometry. Paul begins his reasoning with “God is God” and focuses on what we can do as creatures to live according to our design, and thus fulfill our purpose and gain the

greatest possible joy. Paul makes clear that this means we must follow the path God has laid out for us, to do the good works He places before us, and walk fully in His ways.

The result of fulfilling God's *calling*, His purpose for our lives, is *that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in us, and us in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ*. This also is a point of sanctification; it is a process of spiritual growth that changes us to be like Christ (Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18). He lived the perfect servant's life of faith in God and obedience to God (Philippians 2:5-11). When we fulfill the purpose for which God made us, we gain the greatest fulfillment from life, as we are living according to the purpose for which we were created.

The word translated *grace* in the phrase *according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ* is "charis" which can also be translated "favor." It is God's favor upon us that allows us to have the amazing opportunity to choose to be a faithful witness, not fearing rejection by the world. When we walk as faithful witnesses, we have the incredible privilege of having *the name of our Lord Jesus* being *glorified in us*. "Glory" (Greek "doxa") means the character or essence of someone or something being observed (1 Corinthians 15:40-41).

When we allow Jesus's resurrection power to flow through us, and we walk in His ways, we show His essence to others, and in doing so glorify Him. Jesus said something similar when He spoke to His disciples in John 15. There, He used the fruit of the vine as an illustration of good deeds. His disciples can only do those good deeds if they abide in Him, the Vine, that nourishes His followers:

"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."
(John 15:8)

When we walk in obedience, embracing the world's rejection, difficulty, and even hate, we are setting ourselves up to be rewarded by being glorified with Jesus, and for Christ to be glorified in us, because we are walking in the works He prepared beforehand (Ephesians 2:10).

Biblical Text

¹¹ To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, ¹² so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.