

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS



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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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1 and 2 Thessalonians: Introduction

Paul's ministry in Europe began in Macedonia, where in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea, he preached with power and saw many come to faith in Jesus.

But resistance was strong, angry, and at times, violent. From Berea Paul moved on to Athens and Corinth in Achaia (southern Greece). While there, he received a report from Timothy about the church in Thessalonica, to which he responded with 1 Thessalonians. 2 Thessalonians followed later, after another and disturbing report reached him about the situation in Macedonia.

The general impression we get from these two letters is that the church in Thessalonica was faithful and outspoken about its faith in Jesus Christ.

We have much to learn, both from Paul's ministry in Macedonia as well as from his two epistles to the believers in Thessalonica. Let's begin by looking at the apostle's work of bringing the Good News to this first beachhead in Europe.

We're pleased to make this resource available for personal or group study at no charge, and we hope you will find this series helpful in realizing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God.

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1 Macedonian Call

Pray Psalm 25.4, 5.

Show me Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You *are* the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.

Read Acts 16.6-15.

Reflect.

1. How does the Lord show you His paths? How does He lead you into them day by day?
2. How can you see that Paul was waiting on the Lord? Are you?

Meditate.

The apostle Paul crossed the Bosphorus from Troy to Macedonia with a handful of devoted followers, armed only with the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Their first line of assault on the European continent took them, not before kings and armies, but to a women's prayer group.

The rest, as they say, is history. Beginning in Philippi and spreading to Thessalonica and Berea, Paul and his companions established a beachhead for the Gospel in Europe which would grow and expand until all of Greece and Rome and lands beyond came under the rule and sway of King Jesus.

Paul was clear about his *calling*: "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (v. 9). He was also clear about what that calling entailed: seek the lost and proclaim Jesus to them (v. 10). As Paul was faithful in what the Lord showed him day by day, leading him in His ways and along His paths, God opened doors, provided for his needs, and began the work of turning an upside-down world rightside-up for Jesus.

As we begin our study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, let's follow Paul's example of being clear about our calling and faithful in our every next step. Have you mapped out your Personal Mission Field? Are you seeking the Lord daily to show you His ways and guide your steps into His paths? Are you spending time in His truth, so that He can teach and equip you for every good work (2 Tim. 3.15-17)? And are you waiting on Him, like Paul did, throughout the day to guide, empower, and bless you in all your walk with and work for Him?

Prepare.

1. God does not typically guide our steps through visions, but He does guide our steps and open up paths before us. Does your daily reading of God's Word do this for you? How might you improve your time in God's Word, so that each day you see some new direction or path for your walk with and work for the Lord?
2. Are you praying that the Lord would "open the heart" of people in your Personal Mission Field, so that you can talk with them about Jesus (Acts 16.14)? Do you think that would be a good idea to do each day?
3. How can you tell when you are doing the Lord's will or merely your own will? If you were more consistent in waiting on the Lord throughout the day, do you think you would be more open to Lord's leading? Explain.

It should be noted that the apostle did nothing according to his own will. Rather, whatever he did or did not do, it was under the

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impulse of the Spirit. Ammonius (late 5th-early 6th century), *Catena on the Acts of the Apostles*

Lord, help me to know my calling, and to discern for today and every day, the steps I should take to...

Pray Psalm 25.10-22.

Pray slowly and reflectively. Let the words of this psalm guide you in thinking about the day ahead. As much as possible, use the David's words to express your own words as you praise and submit to the Lord for the day ahead.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 25.10-22 (*Festal Song: Revive Thy Work, O Lord*)

The paths of God are all of love and faithfulness;
All they who keep His covenant the Lord will surely bless.

For Your sake, Lord, forgive. All they who fear You, Lord,
Shall know Your blessings day by day and follow in Your Word.

Your friends are they who fear and seek Your holy face;
Your covenant with them You share and save them by Your grace.

Be gracious, Lord, to me; my heart is weighed with woe.
My troubles and affliction see; let my transgressions go.

Consider all my foes, who hate me all the day;
And rescue my poor soul lest I should stumble in the way.

Preserve me in Your way, redeem Your people, Lord!
We wait for You and refuge seek in Your own faithful Word.

2 Philippi: Worldviews in Conflict

Pray Psalm 2.1-3.

Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*,
“Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us.”

Read Acts 16.16-23.

Reflect.

1. What were the primary concerns of those who had Paul and Silas beaten and imprisoned?
2. Why do you suppose Paul was “greatly annoyed” at the little girl? Wasn’t she, in a certain way, helping his cause?

Meditate.

Prior to this point in his ministry, Paul had experienced a good bit of opposition. Most of that came from Jewish religious leaders who did not agree with his teaching and resented the fact that many of their people were becoming Christians. In Macedonia, Paul would encounter opposition of another kind – a worldview of pragmatic, materialistic, self-interest. It would prove just as hostile to the Gospel as Jewish traditionalism.

We might think that Paul would have appreciated the help of this little girl, since she was announcing to the entire city who Paul was and what he proclaimed. Paul’s annoyance was not so much with the little girl as with the “spirit of divination” which possessed her. Everyone knew this girl was a money-making venture for her handlers, and that she would say just about anything to earn them their “profit.” She was a person who entertained, not someone to be taken seriously. Paul refused to allow the Gospel to be admixed with demonic utterances or materialistic self-interest, so he cast the demon out and set the little girl free of her spiritual torment.

Paul’s mission was thus seen as troubling the city of Philippi “exceedingly,” since he presented a challenge to the settled worldview of the powers-that-be. The rage of these frustrated entrepreneurs and their magistrate lackeys broke out on Paul and Silas in physical abuse and imprisonment. The Gospel is a challenge to unbelieving worldviews, and sometimes the only way opponents can effectively silence those who bear witness to Jesus is through violence and oppression.

But violence, oppression, and imprisonment are no match for the souls of faithful men and the sovereign God they serve. Paul and Silas kept their focus on God during their suffering, and God delivered them and saved some grateful Philippians as well.

The Kingdom beachhead firmly secured in Philippi, Paul and his troop move on to other cities.

Prepare.

1. How would you summarize the worldview held by the people in your Personal Mission Field? Is this worldview likely to be hostile to God and the Gospel? Why or why not?

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2. Paul would not allow the Gospel to be reduced to mere entertainment, or to be regarded as some spiritual circus or money-making venture. Is there any counsel here for churches today?

3. Paul and Silas drew strength from the Lord by singing (v. 25), perhaps even singing a psalm (the Greek text says they were προσευχόμενοι ὕμνον τὸν θεόν, *praying a hymn to God*). Does this suggest anything to you about singing to the Lord as a spiritual discipline?

The devotion of the apostles' hearts and the power of prayer are expressed [here] together, since in the depths of the prison they sang hymns, and their praise moved the earth of the prison, shook the foundation, opened the doors and finally loosened the very chains of those who had been bound. The Venerable Bede (672-735 AD), Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles 16.25

Lord, I need Your strength to serve You throughout this day. Help me so that I...

Pray Psalm 2.7-12.

Pray for the people you will encounter today, that the Lord might allow you to share Jesus' love with someone in your Personal Mission Field.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 2.7-12 (*Agincourt: O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!*)

Proclaim the message far and wide, that God has exalted the Crucified!
From heav'n He sent us His only Son, Who has for us salvation won!

To Christ the Lord be given all who humbly embrace Him and on Him call.

Be wise, be warned: His judgment comes to break the prideful, sinful ones.

Rejoice with fear in Jesus' grace, and worship before His exalted face!

Beware His anger and judgment grim: How blessed are all who rest in Him!

3 Thessalonica: A World Turned Upside-Down

Pray Psalm 27.11-13.

Teach me Your way, O LORD,
And lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.
Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries;
For false witnesses have risen against me,
And such as breathe out violence.
I would have lost heart, unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.

Read Acts 17.1-9.

Reflect.

1. Upside-down? Really? What were those pagan people seeing?
2. Paul presented Jesus from the Old Testament Scriptures. Could you do that?

Meditate.

In this passage we get a glimpse into Paul's method and message. As in Philippi, he sought out the place where people might be most inclined to talk about spiritual things. There, it was a prayer group by the river; here, a synagogue. In the synagogue, Paul would have been recognized as a visitor and perhaps even as a rabbi. He would have waited to be called on, but ready when given the opportunity to speak (cf. Acts 13.15).

Paul's method was to show how the Old Testament pointed to Jesus (Jn. 5.39; cf. Lk. 24.25-27), reasoning from passage to passage to build a case for Jesus as Messiah and Lord. It is unlikely the people of this synagogue would ever have heard such teaching. Synagogue instruction typically consisted of a rehearsal of God's blessings to past generations, a moral exhortation from the Law or prophets, and some reminder of traditional duties and obligations, together with singing and prayers from the psalms. To have all their instruction focused on a Person would have been most unusual. But it also brought together, in the minds of many, questions they'd puzzled over, images on which they'd meditated, and promises for which they longed. And "some of them were persuaded" and believed in Jesus.

Some of the Jews who heard Paul believed; but "a great multitude of the devout Greeks" – those Gentiles who had associated themselves with the synagogue – came to faith, and some of them were women of prominence.

Opposition soon arose, because Paul's message was not merely that Jesus was *Messiah*, but that He was *King* and *Lord*. This was no longer an ethnic religious issue; suddenly it was political, and those of Paul's opponents who recognized this resolved to make the most of it. Jason, with whom Paul and the others were staying (v. 7), became the object of the crowd's ire. After threats and a brief hearing, a bond was put up and he and those arrested with him were let go. But the persecution would continue, as we shall see, even though Paul had moved on. Paul moved on, but the Gospel stayed and flourished.

Prepare.

1. The Greek text describes Paul and his companions as "practicing another King, saying Him to be Jesus." Is "practicing another King" a good summary of the Christian life? Explain.

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2. Paul *reasoned* and *explained* and *demonstrated* Jesus from the Old Testament. Explain each of those terms using one Old Testament passage that teaches you about Jesus.

3. Is King Jesus a political threat? To whom?

He made both things known from the Scriptures at the same time, that the Christ had to suffer and to rise and that this suffering and resurrection pertained to none other than Jesus of Nazareth. For there were certain ones among the Jews, just as there are today, who were so lacking in faith that, although they could not deny that the suffering and resurrection of the Christ were present in the Scriptures, they nevertheless entirely denied that these things pertained to Jesus, and they preferred to look forward to the antichrist rather than to believe in Jesus Christ. And therefore Paul not only preached the mysteries of the Christ, but he also taught that these mysteries were accomplished in Christ Jesus. The Venerable Bede (672-735 AD), *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* 16.25

Father, help me to be more consistent in practicing the Kingship of Jesus. Help me, that is, to...

Pray Psalm 27.1-10.

What specific strength do you need from King Jesus today? As you come into His presence, meditate on all His beauty and salvation, and praise Him accordingly.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 27.1-10 (*Joanna: Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise*)

Lord, You are our Light and our Savior most dear!

You guard us with might; therefore, whom shall we fear?

Though evil surround us, our enemies fall;

No harm shall confound us when on You we call.

One thing we request but to dwell with You, Lord.

Your beauty to test and to think on Your Word.

In trouble You hide us secure in Your grace;

No foe may o'erride us: We sing of Your praise!

Hear, Lord, when we cry and be gracious, we pray!

Lord, do not deny us Your favor this day!

Our help, our salvation, though others may fall,

Preserve our good station when on You we call.

4 Berea: Faith and Flight

Pray Psalm 33.20-22.

Our soul waits for the LORD;
He is our help and our shield.
For our heart shall rejoice in Him,
Because we have trusted in His holy name.
Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us,
Just as we hope in You.

Read Acts 17.10-15.

Reflect.

1. How did searching the Scriptures affect those who heard Paul?
2. Why did Paul have to flee Berea?

Meditate.

A pattern is becoming clear which follows the pattern of Paul's ministry to date: Seek the lost, proclaim Jesus and His Kingdom, persuade some, infuriate others, move along to other places. Paul believed this pattern is what every disciple should expect (1 Tim. 1.16). We're not all called to be apostles or evangelists, but we are called to the Kingdom and glory of God as witnesses for Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 2.12; Acts 18). Like Paul and Jesus, we should be seekers of the lost, ready to proclaim Jesus from His Word, and willing to accept whatever it pleases the Lord to bring our way.

Berea is the last stop in Macedonia. From there, Paul will move south to Achaia, or what is today southern Greece. After an overnight walk, Paul and Silas arrived in Berea and went to the local synagogue. We may assume that Luke was with them as well, and perhaps some others. In Berea, they found many people who were rather more open-minded than those in Thessalonica and who, after much searching of the Scriptures, believed the Gospel. But before Paul could get them rooted as a congregation, trouble-makers from Thessalonica arrived, and he had to depart.

Timothy, it appears, must have stayed on in Thessalonica to help the new church there (he is not mentioned in verse 10, but appears again in verse 14; cf. Acts 14.21-23 and Tit. 1.5). He joined Paul and Silas only later (v. 15). Timothy and Silas stayed on in Berea when Paul had to leave (with Luke and others), but he sent for them to join him in Athens after a time. From there, Timothy would be sent back to Thessalonica to check on the progress of the church (1 Thess. 3.1-6).

Here is another pattern in Paul's ministry. He didn't merely preach the Gospel and start churches – small congregations of believers meeting in homes. He continued to exercise care and oversight of the churches he started, either by visiting them himself or sending others. In addition, as we shall see in our next installment, he used the ministry of writing to continue strengthening those who had come to the Lord.

Prepare.

1. What do you suppose that “searching” of the Scriptures involved? Is this something we should be doing?
2. Paul seems to be making good use of his team as he progresses through Macedonia. What do you suppose Timothy was doing as he stayed in Thessalonica? Or as he and Silas remained in Berea? Why was that work

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necessary?

3. What is suggested about the power of the Word of God in this account? Is it a good idea to encourage those who do not yet believe to “search the Scriptures”? How might you do that?

*They did not investigate like skeptical people, because they had already believed, but like people who were unaware of the prophets’ ancient doctrine. Or rather, they believed more because, after examining the Scriptures, they saw that the circumstances of the incarnation of the Lord agreed with the words of the ancient prophets. Ammonius (late 5th-early 6th century), *Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 17.12-13**

Let Your Word abide in me richly, Lord (Col. 3.16), and help me as I talk with others to...

Pray Psalm 33.1-12.

Ask the Lord to show you how His Word can lead and guide you this day, and how you might share His Word with others.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 33.1-12 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

Sing with rejoicing in the Lord, for praise becomes His righteous ones!

With harps and songs raise grateful words, and let new songs of praise be sung!

Joyfully shout! His Word is true; He does His work in faithfulness.

His love prevails the whole world through; the Lord loves truth and righteousness.

God spoke and heaven came to be, and all its hosts His Spirit wrought.

He heaps the waters of the sea; the deeps their dwelling place are taught.

Let all below now fear the Lord; let all in awe of Him abide!

The worlds exist by Jesus’ Word; let all on earth in Him confide.

He nullifies the nations’ plans; forever stands His sov’rign Word.

All they are blessed who with Him stand – the chosen people of the Lord.

5 The Ministry of Writing

Pray Psalm 19.14.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1.1.

Reflect.

1. Why did Paul write letters? What was he hoping to accomplish?
2. Why has God chosen to use writing as a means of helping us know Him?

Meditate.

Before we begin our study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, I want us to contemplate the role of writing in Paul's ministry, and, in a larger sense, the role of writing in God's plan for redeeming the world.

While Timothy and Silas remained in Berea, Paul went for a brief stay at Athens (Acts 17.14-33), before moving on to Corinth, where Timothy (from Thessalonica) and Silas (from Berea) rejoined him (Acts 18.5; cf. 1 Thess. 3.6). Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians in response to Timothy's report of the situation there. We'll consider Paul's purposes in writing 1 and 2 Thessalonians in our next two installments.

But let's think about writing as a form of ministry. These days, when people are increasingly unwilling to read, we might wonder whether writing still has the kind of potential with which Paul invested it. Many Christians do not consider that reading the Bible daily, completely, and continuously – much less reading anything else – is important for their walk with the Lord. They may read snippets from Scripture, or follow along as the pastor preaches. They might do some reading to prepare for their Bible study group. But as for daily reading, reading again and again through the entire Bible, and reading reflectively, with a view to learning and obedience – this discipline is neglected by many who believe in Jesus.

Paul believed in writing, which means that Paul also believed in reading. Words convey ideas, stimulate and reinforce affections, help to establish settled priorities, lead us to consider our daily path, enable us to identify areas of needed growth, fill our souls with hope, supply the content of our witness, and much more. One of the great achievements of the devil, in these days of his dying gasps, is to sow distraction into the Church. He is happy for us to profess belief in Jesus, go to church, have a great time with our Christian friends, and even pray, as long as we do not devote ourselves to serious reading and study. TV, video games, social media, and other diversions can quickly fill up our time and numb us to the importance of reading. The Word of God cannot take deep root in our souls, cannot bring us into the presence of God's glory, cannot transform us into the image of Jesus Christ, and cannot equip us for every good work if we neglect reading and study of what Paul and the others have written.

Paul believed we should read. God believes we should read. When we embrace reading with the same fervor that Paul and God embraced writing, we will be in a position to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and to work our Personal Mission Field fruitfully.

Prepare.

1. What is your practice of reading the Word of God? Are you as committed to reading the Bible as Paul and God are in having written it?

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2. What can you do to make more time for reading the Word of God? Meditate on Jeremiah 15.16. Is this your view of God's Word?

3. Why do you suppose the Spirit of God has preserved 1 and 2 Thessalonians for us? What should we expect to gain from a close reading of these two epistles?

It is evident from this, that the Apostle had not given over reading, though he was already preparing for death. Where are those who think that they have made so great progress that they do not need any more exercise? Which of them will dare to compare himself with Paul? Still more does this expression refute the madness of those men who — despising books, and condemning all reading — boast of nothing but their own ἐνθουσιασμοὺς divine inspirations. But let us know that this passage gives to all believers a recommendation of constant reading, that they may profit by it. John Calvin (1509-1564), comment on 2 Timothy 4.13

Make me a better reader of Your Word, O Lord! Help me as I try to improve my time in Your Word by...

Pray Psalm 19.7-14.

Give God praise and thanks for all the many ways His Word (Law, testimony, commandment, statutes, etc.) can benefit you.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 19.7-14 (*St. Christopher: Beneath the Cross of Jesus*)

The Law of God is perfect, His testimony sure;

The simple man God's wisdom learns, the soul receives its cure.

God's Word is right, and His command is pure, and truth imparts;

He makes our eyes to understand; with joy He fills our hearts.

The fear of God is cleansing, forever shall it last.

His judgments all are true and just, by righteousness held fast.

O seek them more than gold most fine, than honey find them sweet;

Be warned by every word and line; be blessed with joy complete.

Who, Lord, can know his errors? O keep sin far from me!

Let evil rule not in my soul that I may blameless be.

O let my thoughts, let all my words, before Your glorious sight

Be pleasing to You, gracious Lord, acceptable and right!

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Pray Psalm 115.1.

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,
But to Your name give glory,
Because of Your mercy,
Because of Your truth.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2.10-12.

Reflect.

1. What is the Kingdom of God? What is the glory of God? How can we know when we are fulfilling our calling to God's Kingdom and glory?
2. How did Paul try to help the Thessalonians fulfill this calling?

Meditate.

Paul's ministry to the Thessalonians had the same focus as everywhere else: The Kingdom and glory of God. For all the churches and believers he served, Paul labored and lived, exhorted and encouraged and solemnly charged them all to seek the Kingdom and righteousness of God and do all things to His glory.

In chapters 1 and 2 of 1 Thessalonians, Paul reviews the work of God among them, and reminds them of his example of selfless, dedicated teaching and ministry. He does this to teach them what is required to keep God's people in the path marked out by their calling to His Kingdom and glory, so that they will continue in that path and thus advance the rule of King Jesus on earth as it is in heaven.

So concerned was Paul for the Thessalonians that he sent Timothy to follow-up on their initial visit. When Timothy returned to Corinth and shared his report on the believers in Thessalonica, Paul received it with great relief. In chapter 3, he expresses his gratitude to the Lord, Who has kept the Thessalonians in their calling, and causes them to increase and abound in love and holiness.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide the "application" section of Paul's first epistle, in which he outlines those disciplines and duties which are essential for the believers and their churches to continue growing in the Lord. This he does with a focus on the return of our Lord Jesus, thus setting His appearing as a powerful motivator for the Thessalonians to continue in faith, love, and holiness.

1 Thessalonians is concise, pointed, and pithy in its teaching about living for the Kingdom and glory of God. We'll take our time progressing through this epistle, trusting the Lord to continue His work of sanctification in us as we wait on Him and contemplate His Word.

Prepare.

1. What does Paul mean by saying that God *calls* us? How does He call us? With what in mind? How should hearing His call affect our daily lives?
2. What did Paul do to encourage the Thessalonians to pursue this calling? Meditate on 1 Corinthians 11.1. What are the implications of this for our relationship with the believers we encounter in our Personal Mission Field?

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3. What would you say are the key components of a “walk worthy of God”? How would you assess the state of those components in your own life?

His commendation of the grace of God is contained in the expression, who hath called us into his kingdom. For as our salvation is founded upon God's gracious adoption, every blessing that Christ has brought us is comprehended in this one term. It now remains that we answer God's call, that is, that we shew ourselves to be such children to him as he is a Father to us. For he who lives otherwise than as becomes a child of God, deserves to be cut off from God's household. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on 1 Thessalonians 2.12*

Help me to walk in a manner worthy of You, O God, so that I may...

Pray Psalm 115.1-18.

As you pray, contemplate the day ahead, and consider the opportunities you will have to bless and glorify the Lord. Commit your way unto His Kingdom-and-glory path.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 115 (*Plainfield: Nothing But the Blood of Jesus*)

Not to us, O God, not us, but unto Your Name give glory!
For Your love and faithfulness, ever to Your Name be glory!
Why should the nations cry, “Where is their God on high?”
You rule us, Lord, on high: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Idols made by men’s own hand – ever to Your Name be glory –
see nor hear nor understand – ever to Your Name be glory!
They neither feel nor walk, nor can they speak or talk;
All those who serve them fall, but unto Your Name be glory!

All who trust in Jesus yield – ever to His Name be glory –
find in Him their help and shield: Ever to Your Name be glory!
O Israel, trust the Lord! He helps us evermore!
Fear Him obey His Word: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Blessings from our gracious Lord – ever to Your Name be glory –
will attend us evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!
Bless all who fear You, Lord, all who obey Your Word,
All who Your Name adore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Grant us, Savior, great increase: Ever to Your Name be glory!
Bless us with eternal peace: Ever to Your Name be glory!
Heaven and earth are Yours; let every soul adore
And bless You evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

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Pray Psalm 84.8, 9.

O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;

Give ear, O God of Jacob!

Selab

O God, behold our shield,

And look upon the face of Your anointed.

Read 2 Thessalonians 1.11, 12.

Reflect.

1. In 2 Thessalonians, Paul wants to reinforce the Thessalonians' call to the Kingdom and glory of God, and to good works. Elsewhere he insists that Christians are redeemed for good works (cf. Eph. 2.10; Tit. 2.14). Which good works?

2. What is the connection between doing good works and our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God?

Meditate.

Upon receiving words that some in Thessalonica had distorted his teaching about the day of the Lord and the coming of Jesus, Paul wrote a second letter, probably also from Corinth, which unfolds in three parts.

In chapter 1, Paul gives thanks to God for the Thessalonians and their example of faith, and explains to them that persecution and suffering for the Name of Jesus are inherent in our calling to follow Him. We must neither fear such conditions nor seek to revenge ourselves against persecutors; Jesus will take care of that in due course. Our job is to remember our calling (v. 11) and work hard to continue in it.

In chapter 2, Paul addresses the spurious teaching of some that the day of the Lord had come, with the implication that the Thessalonians had missed it. Paul offers more clarity on that coming day, and indicates that all who teach contrary to the Word of the God and the traditions of the apostles are promoting lies and unrighteousness.

Finally, in chapter 3, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians not to grow slack in their calling but to maintain proper order – following the lead of their shepherds (1 Thess. 5.12, 13) – and work hard at their calling and good works.

Our salvation in Jesus Christ has brought us into the eternal rest of God, but this does not mean we do not yet have much work to do. We do, and Paul insists that we must give thanks to God for His grace and prepare ourselves for the trials and opportunities of each day, so that we might know His peace and fulfill our calling to His Kingdom and glory.

Prepare.

1. Should believers today expect to face persecution and opposition? Should we shrink back from this? Explain.

2. We are called to be witnesses to Jesus Christ (Acts 1.8). *Being* a witness involves more than just *doing* witnessing. How does being a witness fit with the work you've been given to do?

3. Paul summarizes his hope for the Thessalonians in these two epistles as “grace and peace.” What is grace?

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What is peace? Why are these good overall objectives for believers to strive for each day?

He calls us back to the chief end of our whole life—that we may promote the Lord's glory. What he adds, however, is more especially worthy of notice, that those who have advanced the glory of Christ will also in their turn be glorified in him. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on 2 Thessalonians 1.12*

You have called me to Your Kingdom and glory, Lord, and today, as I pursue that calling, help me to...

Pray Psalm 84.

Offer yourself this day as a living sacrifice to God. Let this psalm help you set your mind on the end of your journey and prepare you for any trials or tears that you may face today.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 84 (*Holy Manna: Brethren, We Have Met to Worship*)

Lord of hosts, how sweet Your dwelling;
How my soul longs for Your courts!
Let my soul with joy keep telling
Of Your grace forever more.
Like a bird upon the altar
Let my life to You belong.
Blessed are they who never falter
As they praise Your grace with song!

Blessed are they whose strength is founded
In Your strength, O Lord above.
All whose hearts in You are grounded
Journey in Your strength and love.
Though they weep with tears of sadness,
Grace shall all their way sustain.
In Your presence, filled with gladness,
They shall conquer all their pain.

Lord of hosts, my prayer receiving,
Hear me, help me by Your grace!
In Your courts I stand believing;
Turn to me Your glorious face!
Lord, our sun, our shield, our glory,
No good thing will You deny
To those who proclaim Your story,
And who on Your grace rely.

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Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Why does the Gospel pose a threat to people who hold to other worldviews?
2. What does it mean to “practice the Kingship of Jesus”?
3. Would Paul say of your church, as he said to the Thessalonians, that the witness to Christ has gone forth powerfully from your church in every place? Explain.
4. How do you hope to grow through our study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians? What do you see in these books, as far as we have considered them, that can help you in your calling to the Kingdom and glory of God?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this study? How are you working to implement that lesson in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.