

*2 Thessalonians 1:11-12*

## PREFACE

I confess that what I do not understand about prayer could fill the Library of Congress. Much of what I say in my own prayers is said out of obedience and faith, not from understanding. Try as I might—to read and research and study the topic of prayer in the life of a believer—I freely confess that much about prayer remains a mystery to me. Nevertheless I continue to pray for at least three reasons:

1. **God's word tells us to**; Paul told the Ephesians, *With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, (Ephesians 6:18)*. He tells the Thessalonians near the end of his first letter to "pray without ceasing" (5: 17). Beyond that, God's word is filled with instruction on *how* to pray, and how *not* to pray.
2. **There is an impulse in me, an impulse surely generated by the Holy Spirit, to pray**. I want to; most of the time the impulse to pray seems perfectly natural, and good.
3. **It has been my experience that God answers prayer**, so I know that it can be effective.

Even so, there are times, during prayer, that I wonder, *Why am I doing this? God already knows the situation, as well as what He is going to do about it, if anything. So why does He want me to pray about it?*

The reasons for prayer can be especially challenging when we pray, or are told to pray, for something we *know* God is going to do, because His word tells us He is going to do it. Paul has done this a couple of times in Thessalonians already.

**Read 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13.****Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23.**

All of this brings us to our passage for today, which is Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians—a prayer for something *he has just told them is going to happen*. We know going in that this is not an outlier for Paul; we have just read two other examples of him doing this.

**Read 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.**

## w11

*To this end also we pray for you always*

In our last session the beginning of v9 pointed back to the previous verse. This time the beginning of v11 points forward—sort of. Paul's prayer in these two verses is easily organized into what, why, and how:

**what:** that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,

**why:** so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him,

**how:** according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

"To this end" (Therefore, Wherefore, With this in mind) refers forward to the content of vv11-12. The portion that points *backward* is "your calling" (this calling<sup>KJV</sup>, his calling<sup>NIV, ESV</sup>)—which refers not just to our being called to salvation, but to our call to be the recipients of His glory in the day of Christ's return (v10), also *forward* to v12.

### *What*

*that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,*

In the NASB and KJVs it is easy to miss the fact that God is really the one that does this.

**ESV: that our God may make you worthy of his calling and [that he] may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, (emphasis added)**

The ESV is the only one of our common translations that uses "make you worthy" instead of "count you worthy." The ESV is handy as a reminder that it is God working out all this in the Christian's life, but "count" is really the better translation.

**count, make** = *axiōō* (axe-ee-ah'-oh)= from <G514> (axios); **to deem entitled or fit** :- desire, think good, count (think) worthy.

We saw the intensified form of this word in v5:

**This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.**

When we looked at that I quoted David Guzik.

The idea behind counted worthy is not "seen as worthy" but "reckoned as worthy" as in a judicial decree. Paul's prayer is that the worthiness of Jesus may be accounted to them.

Now, as then, we are not "counted worthy" because we have behaved the correct way, done the correct things; that is, we have not *earned* our worthiness. Rather, our behavior and deeds demonstrate that we are indeed, *in Christ*, worthy of our (His) calling.

Again, note that God Himself is the one who makes all this happen.

**The Message (paraphrase): ...pray that our God will make you fit for what he's called you to be, pray that he'll fill your good ideas and acts of faith with his own energy so that it all amounts to something.**

But again, this raises the question: If God is going to do this, why is Paul praying "always" for it to happen? And I wonder if a verse in Ephesians might give us some help with this—a verse that says much the same thing, but in a slightly different way.

### **Read Ephesians 4:1.**

The word translated "worthy" in this verse is the adverb form of the root of the same word in our text. Here it means "appropriately, as becometh, after a godly sort." Here the emphasis seems to be (with admittedly fractured grammar), *behave as who you have been called to be*, or more to the point, *behave as who you are*.

There is a certain level of personal responsibility to our being “counted worthy.” We are called not just to *be* a Christian, but to *behave* as a Christian. There is, as well we may note, an uncertainty as to how and when the Lord will accomplish this.

Ultimately, however, the reason for these kinds of prayers for preordained events or conditions, falls into the same category as our other prayers: **The purpose of our prayers is more horizontal than vertical.** For example, if I pray for the healing of a brother or sister in Christ, am I informing God of something of which He was unaware? No. Am I expecting to exert undo influence of His sovereign will in the matter? No; in fact, my prayer may even include, “Thy will be done” which not only blunts my specific request for healing, but, once again, prays for something that *will* happen. Of course His will will be done!

The vertical impact of our prayers is often unknown and remains a mystery. But the *horizontal* impact of our prayers is not just known, but immediate. Our prayer for a brother or sister in Christ strengthens our bond with them, and our bond with the church, our family. Absent our prayers on their behalf, our heart would turn cold and stony toward them. Our prayers nurture the fellowship we have with each other.

Along with the horizontal benefit to prayer, there is one very important vertical benefit: Every one of our prayers—be they entreaty, thanksgiving, praise or worship—reinforce and refresh our submission before a holy God. They remind us that He is God and we are not.

So too, perhaps, are prayers such as Paul voices for conditions and events that are certain to occur: they are reminders of our faith and dependency on God, and the bond we have with Him through the blood and grace and mercy of Christ Jesus. Isn't Paul's prayer that God will “fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power” ultimately less about, “Lord God, I sure hope this happens,” than “Lord God, thank you for this reminder of Your sovereign rule over our lives.”

## v12 Why

*so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him,*

Verse 12 also looks back to v10. In v10 Paul describes the moment “when [Jesus] comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed.”

He will come in power and majesty, and bathed in and surrounded by the fullness of His glory. It will truly be something to steal the breath away. The last time He appeared so before humans was on the mount of Transfiguration before only three of His disciples ([Peter, James and John](#)). If we were alive and standing there in that moment of His return we would have no earthly comparison for the sight. Happily, those in Christ today will experience this from the *opposite* direction—not from earth looking up, but from the skies looking down. And those of us accompanying Him will indeed have a comparison for this glory, since we will have been living in its midst in heaven.

But His glory will not be the “what,” but the “why”—“so that the name of our Lord Jesus [that is, everything that is the Christ; His “name” is just another way to refer to the fullness of Him] will be glorified [splendid, noble, gorgeous, honorable] in you.” Believers on earth today are indeed “in Christ” and He is in us. But like Jesus while He was on earth, we are not yet “glorified.”

**Read John 7:37-39.**

Those believers who are there to see Him return at the end of the Tribulation will see the Son of Man in His true glorious state, and, as we discussed in the last session, part of that glory, or one aspect of that glory, will be *realized* in His followers.

### ***How***

*according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

By the grace of our God and His Son, we will be—and, indeed in measure, we already have been—glorified in Christ. As it has been said, we are the only Jesus some will ever see. Because we are in Him, because we are glorified in Him—this is the “how”—we display Him, we manifest Him to a fallen world.

*Pastor Funcke:* It has often been said that the Christian virtues are only impressions of the image of Christ; and that is true and good; but these impressions must find expression in everyday life. We are called of God to make manifest the character of “Him that loved us.” Once, in a large company of Christian men, the most lively regret was expressed that there is no authentic portrait of Jesus Christ as he lived and walked upon this earth. How gladly, it was said, would Christians often look on the features of that face! But one of God’s aged pilgrims stood up and said, “I cannot deplore that at all, because a true Christian is the true likeness of Christ.”