



Thoughts from Second Thessalonians ...

Speaking Proudly

Arrogant pride, boastful pride, or stubborn pride are destructive, and prevent an individual from carrying out the will of God. Hence in the scriptures, pride is generally regarded as a bad quality. "Pride goes before destruction," noted the wise Solomon, "and a haughty spirit before stumbling" (Proverbs 16:18). "Behold," chimed in Habakkuk, "as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). "All of you," exhorted Peter, "clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). But there is a different connotation to *pride* that has a positive thrust. For a man to take pride in his work — to do it well for the glory of God — is a good

thing. This is true in the spiritual arena as well: "For our proud confidence is this," Paul informed the Corinthians, "the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not on fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you" (2 Corinthians 1:12). When brethren do well, there is reason to be proud of them!

- ▼ **Giving thanks** — Men like the apostle Paul did not want to labor in vain; that is, they did not want their efforts with people to be wasted because the people they immersed did not maintain the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. He therefore was excited to be able to write in positive terms concerning the brethren in Thessalonica. "We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren," the apostle opens this second epistle, "as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged ..." (2 Thessalonians 1:3). Anyone who has had a business fail or a relationship dissolve has an idea of what it is like for all the work simply to "go up in smoke." How much more the loss for those who labor for the eternal souls of the lost, and then to have all their efforts fail to have any long-term converts. Paul was thus thankful that the brethren's faith was intact and actually increasing.
- ▼ **Faith enlarged** — The Christian life is to be a life of increasing faith. Even the apostle Paul, when he wrote to the congregation in Corinth describing his suffering in Ephesus, indicated "that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:8). God so orchestrates the lives of Christians that His purpose of increasing their faith is accomplished, so long as they continue to work God's program. The disciples in Thessalonica suffered greatly also in accordance with the plan of God, but they responded positively so that Paul could excitedly say, "your faith is greatly enlarged!"
- ▼ **Love increased** — Another of God's goals is that His love be reproduced in His children of faith. The Thessalonians were thrown together — because of their belief that Jesus was raised from the dead — into the cauldron of suffering. Enduring persecution and encouraging each other, the result was obvious to Paul that "the love of each of you toward one another grows ever greater."

MAY OUR SPIRITUAL LEADERS BE ABLE TO SPEAK PROUDLY OF US.

Since God's plan was being executed in the congregation in Thessalonica, both in a general and personal sense, Paul was greatly encouraged. "Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you," he lauds their faithfulness and love, "among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all the persecutions and afflictions which you endure" (2 Thessalonians 1:4). He was proud of them in the positive use of the term *proud*, and was happy to compliment them. As modern saints increasingly face persecution and affliction by the will of God, may our faith be enlarged, our love increased, and the true spiritual leaders be able to speak proudly of us also!

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