



Thoughts from Second Thesalonians ...

## "To This End"

The gospel is first Christ-centered, then others-centered. Certainly every Christian needs to "put his own house in order," but even that will fail if its major purpose is to benefit the one in the process of rearranging his house. Jesus Himself set the example, making such statements as, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many," and "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Matthew 20:28; Luke 19:10). Once the individual has secured his initial salvation, then the focus must center on Christ in glory, followed by seeking and saving the lost and serving the saints. The apostle Paul, in encouraging the brethren in Thessalonica, reminded them that God would repay with affliction

those who afflicted the disciples of Christ: those who did not know God and those who did not obey the gospel of Christ. This will happen at Jesus' return when He comes to be glorified in His saints.

- **What God could do** — Paul walked in the footsteps of Jesus, and in his others-focused mindset, conscious of the wide divide between the lost and saved at the Lord's return, prayed for the brethren. "To this end," are his words, desiring the faithful continuance of the brethren, "also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power" (2 Thessalonians 1:11). The apostle Paul, one of whose major purposes was to preach the gospel to the lost that they might be saved, is also concerned that the brethren remain faithful until death. Therefore it is in great earnestness that he prays that God might count them worthy of their calling as Christians, and justify them before the great white throne. In his true and honest love for them, he also wants the Father to fulfill every desire that they have for goodness. Children of God have been called out of darkness into God's light; therefore the new heart and renewed mind desire goodness, and Paul is willing to appeal to the All Wise for their desires to be granted. He also refers to "the work of faith." This *work of faith*, as contrasted to the works of the Law, references the participation of the disciples of Christ in the forward movement of the gospel, and their part in overpowering those spiritual forces that resist the efforts of God to reach and reconcile man. Because this warfare is intense, he prays that they may be able to do this work "with power."

- **The purpose** — God has always had a long-term purpose in bringing into existence a race of spiritual men, formed out of the crucible of the old man which was buried in the waters of immersion. As Paul continues his prayer for the faithful brethren in Thessalonica, he emphasizes the purpose of God, stating, "in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:12). The minor prophet had forecast, "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14). Through the precious saints of the new covenant, the name of Jesus is being glorified, and thus the knowledge of the glory of the Lord is spreading all over the earth. It is not surprising, then, that this would be a focus of the apostle Paul's prayer.

Ultimately, everything depends upon the grace of God. *Grace*, in a general sense, refers to all things which come from God's hand. Hence the saints' being worthy of God's calling would be by His grace, just as their ability to fulfill their desires for goodness, or their success in carrying out the work of faith through His power, is all by His grace — a joint grace of God and the Lord Jesus. May His grace abound in modern saints! For "it is to this end" that Paul prayed, and we also pray.

JAY WILSON

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