

Study 1

Read 1 Thessalonians Chapter 1

1:1-2

Paul opens this book with virtually the same exact wording as 1 Thessalonians. Take a minute to look back and note the similarities.

1:3

The same thankfulness and cause for praise is given here as previously in 1 Thessalonians. What is named as causing Paul to feel these things?

NOTE: A commentator, Robert L. Thomas, points out that Paul had prayed for the Thessalonians go grow in love and faith in the first epistle, so it is fitting that he would be rejoicing now over their growth in these ways.

Why is the author thanking GOD for the growth of the believers' faith rather than thanking the Thessalonians themselves for their faithfulness?

1:4

What are the reasons given behind the missionaries' boasting?

What speaks the most to you personally about God's greatness? What causes you to love and worship God more deeply when you look at the lives of other believers?

Is it okay to boast in people rather than God alone? In 1 Thess. Paul said the same kind of thing:” For what is our hope of joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?

For you are our glory and joy.” (speaking of the Thessalonian believers in 2:19-20)

What else, at the same time, do we need to remember about all human beings? We want to be careful to not put people up on a pedestal or thing too highly of them.

Where is the balance between admiring and praising people and yet recognizing their frailty and shortcomings? Use Scripture and examples of people in the Bible as you answer this.

NOTE: Thomas helpfully comments that some of the Thessalonian believers had apparently felt inferior because of failures, so they themselves were not inclined to boast. Paul's words here would have encouraged them.

Paul models here one way to love people whom he is discipling: encouragement. How encouraging of a person are you?

Are you slow or quick to praise people and encourage them?

Would God have you to increase in your encouragement of fellow believers in order to more effectively love His church?

1:5

What is Paul saying is the evidence of the righteous judgment of God? To what is the "this" referring?

By what are they considered worthy of the kingdom of God?

(Note also that verse 11 of this same chapter uses the same word, about them being worthy of His calling. Also, Philippians 1:27-28 contains similar language that may help us clarify this verse: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God)."

NOTE: In The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Thomas notes this glorious truth:
"It will not be self-earned but a gracious divine impartation resulting from the decision to believe in the Lord Jesus who himself earned the believer's forgiveness of sins and eternal life by dying a sacrificial death. The worthiness of the Thessalonian believers had already been established before persecutions came. " Hallelujah!

1:6

What are the two things God says in this verse that He will do when Jesus is revealed from heaven?

To what day is this "revealing" referring? Look to Revelation 19 to further enlighten you.

In bringing up this future day, to what are the missionaries pointing the Thessalonians for hope and encouragement?

As you interact with others, to what do you point them for comfort?

When seeking to minister to hurting and needy people, do you point them to something more temporal, or to our more permanent hope?

1:8

Who are the people stated as being the recipients of vengeance of Jesus? Are these two different groups of people, or one in the same? Why?

Vengeance is an awfully strong word and even sounds hateful to our ears. Yet our God—who is the very essence of love—the Lord Jesus—is said to be going to inflict vengeance. How do we reconcile these two concepts and attributes of God?

Look at Psalm 94 and read more on God's vengeance.

Here the Thessalonians are called to obey the gospel. We know that gospel means “good news.” How do we obey good news? What does this mean?

1:9

Who will be the one executing the destruction mentioned in this verse? _____

Yet, it says that they will not experience the presence of the Lord. How might that work?

Take a few minutes to meditate on the terrors that await the unbeliever at the coming of Christ. To what do these thoughts drive you? Does the Lord motivate your heart in any direction as a result of these truths?

Complete these thoughts now by consoling yourself with these words; “Yes, He is coming as a righteous judge to judge the world. But for you, he is coming as a husband with gifts. Instead of a sword, you will get a crown. In the place of pleas for protection, you’ll be filled with praise, rejoicing at the sight of the lover of your soul.”

1:10

What is given here as the purpose for which Jesus will be coming on that day?

Pretend you are talking to a brand new believer. Give a very simple explanation of the Christian word “glorify.” What does it mean for God to be “glorified in His saints?”

As humans, it is sinful for us to desire to “marveled at.” God calls us to humility and a lowly view of ourselves, rather than pride. How then, is it right for Jesus to come to earth in order to be “marveled at?”

Why does Paul count the Thessalonians among those who will glorify Jesus and marvel at him, according to this verse? What is his basis for this assumption?

How do you treat the testimony that is God's Word? With what kind of sobriety and urgency and diligence (or lack thereof) do you approach your time in it?

In our time and culture, even those who call themselves believers argue over the inerrancy, authority, and sufficiency of Scripture. Where do you stand personally?

Do you trust that His Word does not have any real contradictions?

Do you believe what 2 Timothy says, that "ALL Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness?"

If you say you believe it in your head, how does your life reflect it?

Would this be evident to others about you?

What areas in your life now might be contradicting your professed belief in His Word?

1:11

To what "end" is Paul referring here? What is the calling that Paul is speaking of? A calling to faith?

To ministry? To a holy life? Romans 8:29-30 says, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." Allow this to inform your

answer. Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians reveals that our salvation is more than a verbal profession of faith or intellectual assent to orthodox doctrine. See James 2:19 . What all does saving faith, then, entail?

How is one ever "worthy" of His calling, as mentioned here? This is related to the question in verse 5.

We are all sinners saved by grace alone through faith alone. That being the case, what would Paul have in mind here about us being worthy?

GOD who is the actor in these prayers. Sanctification is the process by which He makes worthy those who are in and of themselves unworthy.

Is it an option for us to not grow in sanctification, or to being being "made worthy?"

What verses support the idea that we will indeed grow if we are saved?

If we are guaranteed to grow into the likeness of Christ and being "made worthy", then why does Paul pray for that?

The second part of this verse reads, "...may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power..." We can be resolved to do good and work out our faith, but apart from the work of God through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we will not be effective.

1:12

Paul always reminds us of the ultimate purpose of things. What, stated here, is the purpose of our being made worthy and fulfilling every resolve...?" (the "so that" tells us)

Usually we understand what it means for Jesus to be glorified in us. What, though, does it mean for us to be glorified in Him? See below some verses to guide our thinking...

“Humble yourself before the Lord, and He will exalt you.” (James 4:10)

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:5)

“Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.”(Proverbs 10:6)

What else could it mean for us to be glorified in Jesus?

In this small book of three chapters, the title “Lord Jesus” or “Lord Jesus Christ” appears eleven times! And nowhere do we see the name Jesus unless “Lord” precedes His name. In addition to that, we see the word “Lord” another six times. What do you think this reveals about Paul’s understanding of the 2nd person of the Trinity?

What implications and applications does this have for us and all of His followers?

The phrase “according to the grace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ” modifies the verb “be glorified.” So it is by God’s grace that we glorify Christ, and He, us. Apart from God’s grace, we cannot glorify God. It even takes God’s work to glorify Himself. Truly “apart from (Jesus) we can do nothing,” as we are told in John 15.

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To wrap up your time in the Word, take a minute to pray about the things the Lord has brought to mind during this time. What sin needs to be confessed? What praise needs to be voiced? Allow your heart to overflow in thankfulness for God’s Word, His church, and His Son’s future return.