

Factoring God into Believers' Preciousness, Power, and Praiseworthiness

Thursday, June 16, 2022 • Read 2Thessalonians 1:1–4

Questions from the Scripture text: Who were the apostolic team from whom this letter came (v1)? To whom was it addressed? In whom was it written (and in whom was it to be received)? What two benefits/blessings does v2 pronounce upon them? From Whom do these two things come? In what condition does the apostolic team find themselves at the beginning of v3? To do what (are they bound)? When? What do they call the Thessalonians? How do they commend this thanksgiving? What about the Thessalonians' faith makes this thanksgiving fitting? What about the Thessalonians' love makes this thanksgiving fitting? How pervasive among them is this sort of love? What else does the apostolic team do (v4)? Among whom? For what two characteristics? Under what circumstantial difficulties?

How are we to think and feel about true congregations of Christ's church? 2Thessalonians 1:1–4 looks forward to the second serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these four verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that we are to think of churches as being united to God through Christ, dependent upon God in Christ, unto the praise of God in Christ, by showing the power and goodness of God in Christ.

Paul (and Silvanus and Timothy) thinks of the Thessalonians as having their existence in God as Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. He uses an adjectival form of their city so that the way v1 reads makes it almost sound like God is their location. The Lord identifies Himself with His people. He has united them to Himself. They ought to be precious to us as part of His preciousness to us.

Paul thinks of the Thessalonians as living in dependence upon God's goodness and power. Rather than greet them from himself, the apostle greets them with grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. God's grace is His blessing for those who deserve only curse and His strength for those who possess only weakness. His peace is the commitment of His whole self to our whole good.

These are things that cannot come jointly from God and the apostle. They come only from God. By describing them as coming jointly from God as Father and Jesus Christ as Lord, the apostle makes a strong claim that Jesus Christ is God. But He is not just deity in the abstract; He is deity upon Whom believers' lives rest in strong, safe dependence.

Just as the apostle found them precious for God's sake, he has a sure hope for them according to the working of God's power in them. It is this working of God in them upon which the success of the apostolic letter hinges. The same is true for us. We read God's Word because we trust the God of the Word to use it as He works powerfully in us.

Paul thinks of the Thessalonian believers as credits unto the divine grace. Indeed, when he thinks of them, he feels himself to be a debtor, under an obligation that must be paid. That's what the word "bound" means in v3. What God has done in them demands thanksgiving and praise unto God. Thanksgiving when talking to God directly (v3) and praise of God's work in them when talking to others (v4).

This is "fitting" (properly merited) because it is from God that their "faith grows exceedingly" (v3). Their heart of faith toward God is something that only God can produce, and that is a proper cause of thanksgiving and praise!

It is from God that their love abounds each one toward each other (v3). It's one thing when some of them love some others dearly, but this is a love produced by God (and therefore in all of the believers) in which they love others for God's sake (and therefore they love all believers). Their heart of love toward one another is something that only God can produce, and that is a proper cause of thanksgiving and praise!

And it is from God that they maintain patience and persistence even under persecutions and afflictions (tribulations, v4). Grace and peace are not found in the absence of trials but believing, patient enduring of them. Their heart of patience under trial is something that only God can produce, and that is a proper cause of thanksgiving and praise!

Dear reader, if we believe in the Jesus Christ as our Lord and God, and if we know the Father as God our Father, then let us think properly of other believers: valuing them as united to our God, praying for and ministering to them as those who will be preserved and prospered by God, and giving thanksgiving and praise to God for the heart that He gives them toward Himself, toward others, and in their circumstances!

Whom should you love with a similar love as the apostle had toward the Thessalonians? Why? How? What hope do you have for them, or for yourself? How do you express that hope or seek to obtain it? How are you going about identifying the fruit of God's gracious work in others? How are you responding to it when you see it?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for joining us to Yourself through Jesus Christ. Forgive us, for when we forget what a wonderful thing a believer is in his union with Christ, and when we fail to treasure them for their connection to Him. We thank You that You are graciously at work in us and other Christians. Forgive us for when we either think that our own power can add to this, or when we are doubting and anxious about them. Help us to give thanks and praise for what You have done, and strengthen us by this thanksgiving and praise to expect more of Your work until it is completed in Christ, in Whom we ask it, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP32AB "What Blessedness" or TPH409 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Second Thessalonians, chapter 1, verses 1 through 4. These are God's words Paul Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians and God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ grace to you and peace from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We are bound to thank God always for you brethren as it is fitting because your faith grows exceedingly and the love of every one of you all abounds towards one each other, so that we ourselves both of you among the churches of God for your patients and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you and door So far the reading of God's inspired and inherent word.

Even as the apostle begins the letter, he is modeling for the Thessalonians. How to think about other believers. And the first thing that he models for us is to think of other believers as being united, to God, united, to the Lord Jesus Christ, Pennsylvania and Timothy to the Church of the Thessalonians.

In God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. He uses a preposition here that the often uses for location. Not in the first letter to the Thessalonians and that letter is similar to what he says here. But in other letters to other places, you'll say to the church, or to those who are in, and he'll give a city corn Ephesus.

Etc Here. He uses an adjectival form of the city name when he says to the church of the Thessalonians. And then he says in. But instead of a city he says, God and

God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This of course, is one of the hundreds and thousands of proofs of Jesus's divinity in the Bible because he's considering them primarily according to their eternal location.

They have an earthly location and an eternal location. The earthly location is that the city of Thessalonica, but the eternal location is in God, the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. As the apostle says elsewhere believers' lives are hidden with God in Christ, Jesus. And so their precious because they are joined to Jesus and they get their life from Jesus.

And what he does to them, his service, his love unto them is really done unto Jesus. That's something that we learned recently in his conversion, even on this past Lord's day. And here's the voice from heaven. And the voice says Saul Saul. Why are you persecuting? And he doesn't say the church or Then, the Lord Jesus says, why are you persecuting me?

And so now he's gone from persecuting Jesus to loving and serving Jesus, by loving and serving. Those who are joined to them, We should value other believers and love other believers and serve other believers as those who are in union with Christ and we should be encouraged as we minister to them.

Not because of how well they seem to be doing although the Thessalonians are doing well and he's going to be talking about that in a moment in verses three and four. But the reason to be encouraged as you serve believers, is that there's a work begun in them that God is going to bring to completion.

This is, this is one of the great differences between a baptistic approach to Christian parenting and a Presbyterian Covenantal approach to Christian parenting. We know that God is the one who has put the children in our household and he's made promises concerning them. And so we parent not in fear that they won't become part of the church, but they're already part of the church.

We parent not in fear that they won't believe but in hope that God who put them in our family and put them in the church and has declared them holy and set apart to him from the world already even before they come to faith in Jesus Christ that he is going to bring them to that faith and therefore we use his means with joy and zeal even though if we were to judge by how well you guys do, we would often be discouraged.

And yet the apostle says to the Thessalonians grace to you and peace from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, in God, the Son, whom we know, as the Lord Jesus Christ, God has committed himself entirely to bringing the elect to faith and building them up in that faith.

And so, he says, grace to you. God's grace is blessing for those who deserve curse because Jesus is deserved the blessing and taken the curse God's grace is strength four. And in those who have only weakness, remember my grace is sufficient for you. For my strength is made perfect and weakness because God has made his very strength to be ours through faith in Jesus Christ and union with Him, which God the Holy Spirit applies to those who are believing in Jesus And then not just grace to you.

But also peace from God. Our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, that those who come to God through Christ, those who belong to God in Christ, they're hostilities with God and God's righteous and just hostility against them has been put to an end. Therefore, if we are justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord.

Jesus Christ, Romans 5, Therefore there is now no condemnation for the same group, the beginning of Romans chapter 8. And so instead of God bending all that he is against us in righteous wrath bends, all that he is for us in righteous mercy and therefore, peace with God, ought to produce that piece of heart that we sometimes mean, when we say the peace of God talking about the effect that the reality has upon us, but properly a piece of God refers first to the reality and only secondarily to the effect that God.

Now, instead of being our enemy is our ally and all that he is. Is it to doing us? Good. So not only is he giving us of Himself for us and in us, but he is also making all things everywhere. Work for our good. Everything he does. Now, is not only for His glory, but in that alliance, that we have with him in our peace with God, everything that he does, is now both for his glory and for our good.

And so it's very encouraging to the apostle to write to a group of people who have grace and peace from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, because the good that he hopes to see produced in them is not going to come from them. And it's not going to come from him.

It's a great burden and one that a man cannot bear and apparent cannot bear to think, other than instrumentally about the means that God has given us with which by which to raise our children or for a minister or an elder or evangelist or you and a friend or you the brother or sister whoever it is that you hope to see either come to faith or grow in faith.

It is a burden too great to bear to think that somehow by the level of your consistency or the excellence of your speech or persuasion, etc, or the righteousness, even before, God in the sincerity of hearts that you have towards him. While you try to minister to somebody that any of these things are ever going to produce in the the one to whom you are ministering or whom you are, evangelizing that you could ever produce and then the desired effect, No God's grace, God's peace, produces the desired effect.

And when he has brought them into his church and especially when he has brought them to believe in their hearts and confess with their mouths, that Jesus Christ. Is there resurrected Lord. Then you are much encouraged even when sometimes they themselves are discouraging. So first of all, we see them in or to see other believers see one another in union with Christ first one and second of all as those in whom God's grace and peace are operating and so they are both precious to us and we are much encouraged by the power that is at work in them.

And then, therefore, in the third place, we are eager to recognize and praise the gracious work of God in them, both to God and to others. He says, we are bound to thank God always for you brethren as it is fitting. This language of being bound is actually financial language of a contractual debt or necessary debt or obligation that is owed.

And he says it is owed to God, that we ceaselessly that, we continually repay repeatedly. Give, thanks to God for you brethren. This is fitting. This is necessary. This is a right response to what is happening. Why? Because your faith grows exceedingly and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.

And we're gonna dip into verse 4 as well. You are. You have patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure. So These are things, of course that are only rightly genuinely produced by God. And you don't have to know with a certainty that that for which you are praising him is genuine, of course, you exercise, some wisdom and discernment and keeping in mind that all of these things are going to be imperfect.

But to whatever extent the growth of the faith is real and the love of everyone for all the others is real and the patience under trial and persecution is real. You give praise and thanks to God because it's from him alone that it could have come. It has come through that union with Christ.

That verse 1 describes. It has come by that grace and peace of God operating in them by the Lord. Jesus Christ that verse 2 describes And so we respond to it with the Thanksgiving that verse 3 describes and with praise to others as well. So that we are ourselves both of you among the churches of God.

For these things. Both letting them know of other reasons to praise God, the churches of God exist, for the worship of God. And one of the things to praise and thank Him for is what he's actually doing. We want other people to praise and give thanks to God. So for instance, one of the things that I'll be doing hopefully Lord's Day morning as I report on the Senate is giving the congregation reason to bless God's name for his mercy in this season of the life of the ARP.

But similarly, we want to give other people reason for blessing. The name of God, This is one of the reasons to exercise faith and love and patient, endurance independence upon God's grace. We know it can only come from God's grace. You can't work these things up in yourself. And if you did, then that wouldn't give people.

Pray reason to praise God. It would give people reason to praise you, But if your des areas that others would see how good and merciful and powerful God is both for the forgiveness and for the sanctifying of sinners, then that is a powerful motivator to grow in faith to grow and love to patiently endure trial.

So that they may praise and thank God with you and that they may even tell others what God has been doing in you. It's a very exciting thing to meet a genuinely alive Christian, and to be able to tell others that God is still at work. And it's very, it's a very encouraging thing to me to genuinely spiritually a life church and to be able to tell others that God is at work.

That he may do this and is doing this in other Christians and in other churches. And so even before he gets into the letter and some of the discouraging things that are going on in the churches at the time, he gives them already in his introduction in his greeting.

The the key to overcoming, the discouraging things that are happening in the churches, and in the world. And that is to remember how salvation happens through union with God, particularly through union with the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of God, particularly, by the power of the Lord, Jesus Christ, His grace and just peace unto, the praise of God.

And we would say, of course, particularly the praise of our Lord. Jesus Christ amendment spray. We thank you. Lord. For this portion of your word. Thank you for reminding us of how you have invested the praise of your name. In saving us that you are pleased to display the riches of your glory in vessels prepared for mercy.

And so we pray that you'd be merciful upon us. Oh God, that you would yes. Increase our faith that we might increase in our experience of and expression of our union with Christ Work powerfully in us by your grace continue bending, all things in all places, at all times, unto your self in unto your glory and our good and help us O Lord to recognize that this is what is happening and give praise and thanksgiving both for what you are doing in us and also Lord for what you are doing and others.

We're so thankful to you, We ought to be more thankful grant by your spirit's blessing upon this word that our hearts would be stirred up with more thankfulness that out of a focus on you. We would be optimistic and joyous and zealous. And vigorous thankful to you increase us, we pray in faith and love and patience endurance that we might give more.

Thanks and that your people might have more clause in our lives to give. Thanks to you, which we ask and for which we thank you. In Jesus name. Amen