

Paul's Prayer Report
2 Thessalonians 1:11-12
Part Two

One of the most unusual legacies of World War II were the cargo cults. Many of the aboriginal island people ranging all the way from Australia to Indonesia were first exposed to modern civilization through American military forces in World War II. The Americans would use these islands for landing strips. These aboriginal island people watched planes come out of the sky, land, unload cargo and then take off. Some of those islanders concluded that the American soldiers were gods. Certain tribesmen built altars to the cargo gods. The altars were often in the shape of an airplane.

After the war, as civilization began to penetrate these tribes, they found that the interest in these cargo gods had not diminished. And because of the emphasis on the cargo and materialistic bent that their religion had taken, missionaries had difficulty in sharing the gospel. It was not so much the cry of their heart "show us the savior" as much as it was the cry of their heart "show us the cargo."

Some people approach prayer with this same kind of mindset. They want their prayers to be the means by which cargo is delivered to them. The cargo of earthly ease, comfort, health and success.

We considered last week Paul that certainly understood the importance of prayer as a resource in experiencing the best of what life had to offer. Hopefully this past week you have been challenged in this extremely important area of your Christian experience. But the best that Paul had in mind certainly was not the same as these aboriginal island people. Their focus was on physical and the temporal. Paul's focus was on the spiritual and eternal.

Let us again read **2 Thessalonians 1:11-12** and see if this is not true. **"To this end** (the coming glorification of Christ in His saints Paul says...) **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; (12) 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."** If we are going to actually make our life count in terms of what really matters we need to focus on those things that have eternal consequences. Let us look at Paul's requests.

THE REQUESTS

The first request is a prayer for worthiness. Let us look at **V. 11**, **"that our God may count you worthy of your calling."** Or in other words that God might make you worthy of the name you bear. If you want to go around and say you are a Christian, then you need to be concerned about being worthy of that name.

When **"calling"** is referred to in the New Testament epistles, it refers to an efficacious call to salvation. In **Romans 8:29-30** we read these words, **"For whom He foreknew, He also**

predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; (30) and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” Paul spoke of his call in **Galatians 1:15**, **“But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother’s womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased (16) to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, (17) nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.”**

Having been called and become by His grace a child of God, we have a responsibility to live in a manner worthy of that calling (**Ephesians 4:1-3; Philippians 1:27-28; Colossians 1:10-12**). We need to live our lives in such a way that people might see what we have become in Christ.

What specifically might be seen when we walk in a manner worthy of our calling? We do not have to guess because Paul frequently calls Christians to walk in a manner worthy. He gives more detail in **Ephesians** than he does here in **2 Thessalonians**. In **Ephesians 4:1** we read, **“I, therefore the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling which you have been called. (2) With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, (3) being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”** Again in **Philippians 1:27-28** we read these words, **“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; (28) in no way alarmed by your opponents - which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God.”** Then again in **Colossians 1:10-12** we read these words, **“So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing the fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (11) Strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously (12) giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.”** How are we to walk? We are to walk in a manner worthy of our calling.

A worthy walk is a walk in humility, in purity, in contentment, in faith, in righteousness, in unity, in gentleness, in strength, in love, in joy, in thankfulness, in light, in knowledge, in wisdom, in truth, in fruitfulness. The apostle John sums it all up very nicely in **1 John 2:6**, **“the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”**

When we pray we need to be focusing on the right stuff. It is this kind of stuff that we need to be focusing on in our prayers. How are you doing? What else does he pray for?

The second request is a prayer for goodness. Let us look at **V. 11** again, **“To this end we pray always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness.”** The word **“fulfill”** (PLEROO) means to “accomplish.” Paul is praying that God might accomplish everything in their lives that they desire when what they desire is good by the Lord's definition (**Psalms 21:23; 37:4**).

In **Psalm 21:2-3** it says, **“Thou hast given him his heart’s desire, And Thou hast not withheld the request of his lips. (3) For Thou dost meet him with the blessings of good things.”** In other words the Psalmist was saying that the Lord gave Him what he asked for because it was good.

In **Psalm 37:4** it says, **“Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desire of your heart.”** If we are delighting in the Lord our longing will be for goodness.

Paul was praying that every good desire that the Thessalonians had would be accomplished. And the Thessalonians had many. It is a wonderful thing when I go to our Bible study group and see people who really truly want to abound in love, to be patient with all men, to become bolder in outreach. When we see this desire in the heart of our Christian friends, let us join ourselves with Paul and pray that the Lord would **“fulfill every desire for goodness”** that fills their heart. What else does Paul pray for?

The third request was for power. Let us look one more time at **V. 11**, **“To this end also we pray for you always that God count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power.”**

These Thessalonians were already involved in the work of faith. We saw this in **1 Thessalonians 1:3**. In fact there is no such thing as faith without work. In **James 2:26** it says, **“For just as the body with the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”** So the Thessalonians had real saving faith and it showed. Paul is here praying that their work of faith might prove itself powerful.

The work of faith is rooted in the word of God. The work of faith is not rooted in our will but rather in the revealed will of God. God does not want to move marginally in the pursuit of those things which He has revealed to be good, but to move powerfully (**V. 11**).

We are not trapped by the forces of our past. What does **Ephesians 3:20** say? **“Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.”** Let us sell God short and let us stretch ourselves in prayer. We must not see ourselves as victims but as victors.

Why did Paul pray the way he prayed? The reason is given to us in **V. 12**.

THE REASON

The reason Paul prayed as he did was so that the Lord would be glorified in us and we in Him. Isn't this what **V. 12** tells us? **“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.”**

The number one excuse people give for why they are not interested in the Christian faith is because of all the hypocrites they see. Hopefully the Thessalonians would not give occasion for such an accusation. Hopefully, rather than being the basis for the Lord being blasphemed, they

would become the basis for the Lord Jesus being glorified. This is the reason why we are to live. We are not to live to be comfortable or successful but rather we are to live in such a way that Christ might be seen in and through us. All things have been created by Him and for Him. That is why Paul was praying as he did in these verses. And hopefully we will reflect this same emphasis in our own praying.

Hopefully as we pray for things such as worthiness, goodness, and power, Christ might be seen and as He is seen, He might be glorified. Even now, despite the restriction of a mortal body and a hostile environment, enough should be seen of Christ in us to redound to His glory and in a secondary sense, to our own. Isn't this what the passage says? **“In order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in Him.”**

Those who serve Christ and are seeking to exalt Him will inevitably be honored themselves. If we honor Christ, Christ will honor us. This is experienced at times in this life but this will be even more true in the life to come. There is no room for self-satisfaction for the verse goes on to say, **“According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”** Apart from our attachment and union with Christ there certainly would be nothing of honor to commend ourselves to anyone.

CONCLUSION

In light of the second coming of Christ which we considered in **VV. 5-10**, let us not set our affections on things of this world, but on things above; on eternal things. If this is our focus then we must understand that the resource that God has provided for us in this quest is prayer. Just as Paul prayed, so must we. We must be careful about what we pray. We must understand the type of requests that should dominate our prayer lives. Certainly we see examples of the kind of requests that we should pray for in **V. 1**. Therefore when we pray we are seeking to come into line with the will of God. We are seeking to advance His purposes and His plans. And the reason is ultimately that God might be put on display.

A life committed to prayer is not easy. A life committed to praying for things which have eternal value is not easy. A life committed to praying with the ultimate goal to glorify the Lord is not easy. But hopefully we as a congregation would be willing to do this. Hopefully we would have the mental toughness that this requires.

Last century there were a group of men that demonstrated the kind of toughness in respect to their job that we need to demonstrate in respect to our job as believers to advance the kingdom of God through prayer for the right things with the right reasons.

The Pony Express was a private express company which carried mail by a relay of horseback riders. The eastern end was St Joseph, Missouri and the west end of the route was Sacramento, California. The cost of a letter was \$2.50 per ounce and that was over 100 years ago. If the weather and the horses held up and the Indians held off the letter would complete its journey in 10 days. That is how long Lincoln's inaugural address took to get to Sacramento. The Pony

Express was only in operation from April 3, 1860 to Nov. 18, 1861, a period of 17 months. Then the telegraph came and that was that.

Being a rider was tough. They would ride at top speed, bouncing from one horse to another. They were expected to cover 100 miles a day, changing horses every 15 to 25 miles. Other than mail, the only baggage that they were allowed to carry contained a few provisions. A little bit of flour, corn meal and bacon. A medical pack of turpentine, borax, and cream of tartar. In order to travel light, the men always rode in short-sleeves, even during the winter.

You might ask how they ever recruited anybody. Here is an add from a San Francisco newspaper recruiting for the pony express:

WANTED, YOUNG SKINNY WIRY FELLAS (YOU DON'T WANT TO KILL THE HORSE). NOT OVER 18. MUST BE EXPERT RIDERS WILLING TO RISK DAILY. (FINAL NOTE) ORPHANS PREFERRED.

They never had a lack. They always had a waiting list. Some people were drawn by the attractiveness of such sacrifice.

Today I would also like to put forth a similar ad, not recruiting for Pony Express riders but for prayer warriors. Wanted: Christians who are willing to expend themselves daily in the work of intercession. Must be able to set aside earthly concerns in order to focus on matters with eternal value. Only those who are truly seeking to bring honor to the one who loved us and gave Himself for us need apply.