**Faith in Uncertain Times - Part 10**

**God's Redemptive Purposes - 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12**

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – April 11th, 2021

**Intro:**

* This morning we are starting the second half of our series "Faith in Uncertain Times" as we turn to the letter of 2nd Thessalonians. This letter covers some important ground regarding our understanding of the end, the character and working of God, and our response and responsibility in the light of this truth and His grace.
* The hearts of our missionary men, Paul, Silas and Timothy, were still very much connected and concerned for the new church plant in the city of Thessalonica. These men were forced to move on because of the strong opposition and persecution to the gospel's message.
* They were now stationed in a city called Corinth and had received news from these new believers through Timothy who had returned and informed them. Around 6 months later, they received a letter from them.
* 2nd Thessalonians was written in response to this letter. In the opening section that we are focusing on this morning, Paul addresses how God uses praise, persecution, and prayer in His redemptive plan to a people living in uncertain times. The aim of this message is for you to understand God's redemptive purposes through these things so you will be encouraged in your faith, strengthened in your hope, and be empowered to continue to persevere by His grace.

**2 Thess 1:1-2 NIV**

**Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

* Our three mighty missionaries greet the beloved people of the church they planted in Thessalonica, those who are "called out" by the gospel into the family of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. They extended both their hand and their heart in the blessing of both grace and peace.
* Of all the things that they wanted for them, why grace and peace? (By the way, this was the blessing that Paul commonly gave to all the churches.) Why not "strength and honor" or "love and faith?" Why "grace and peace?" Because it is through the grace of the Lord that we know anything. It is through the grace of the Lord that we do anything. It is through the grace of the Lord that we are anything. It is His power that works in us that makes and accomplishes everything. Apart from Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5), and apart from Him, we are nothing (1 Cor. 13). And because of this grace, we have peace. We have peace with God, we have peace with others, and we have peace within ourselves.
* After this greeting and blessing, Paul moves on to encourage them with praise.

**Understand God's redemptive purpose for praise**

* I chose the word "redemptive" purpose because that is what God is doing during our time here on earth. We need redemption, and He is the one who delights to restore us. When it comes to the tool of praise, God uses it to encourage us and focus us because we are prone to be discouraged, and we are inclined to lose our focus on what ultimately is of the highest value and importance.

**2 Thess 1:3-4 NIV**

**We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for each other is increasing. 4 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.**

* *Praise gives God glory* – God is glorified when we are most satisfied in Him. When we choose to see what is good and right, when we decide to see how He is working, He gets the praise. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God (Matt. 5:8). We must ask God to give us a pure heart so that we, in turn, will see God for who He is and what He does. We cannot do this ourselves but ask Him for it, and He will do the work in you.
* *Praise provides us encouragement* – encouragement to continue to do what we have been doing. Reward what you want to be repeated – catch people doing something good and tell them so.
* *Praise helps us focus* – when something is praised, it is something we focus on. In this case, the highest and best thing they were doing is growing in both faith and love. This is the church leaders' primary concern, and this should also be our primary concern for us as individuals and as a church. They did not measure a church by the number of people who attended or the amount of money in the place (even though these things can indicate love). What they were looking for is if people loved each other and that their love was growing and if people had faith, and if that faith was growing. The best way to tell if this is happening is when we go through tests. Anyone can love others when it is easy; anyone can have faith when it is easy. Where are you when it is difficult? Paul praised them for these things when they focused on making sure they continued with these things.
* *Praise builds others up* – if we are healthy, when others are praised for what they did during difficulties, this gives us encouragement to continue moving forward in our situations. This is why it is good for us to remember and tell stories and personally know their stories. This gives us encouragement and an example to follow in their footprints (Phil. 4:9).

**Understand God's redemptive purpose for persecution**

**2 Thess 1:5-7a NIV**

**All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. 6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well.**

* "All this" – refers to their continual, persistent growth in faith and love through persecution and the fact that people choose to persecute and create trials and trouble for others.
* “All this is evident” – that God's judgment is right – which means that there will be a judgment and God will be the judge. His judgment is right because it is based upon the evidence, and the evidence will be true and clear for what it is.
* *Persecution reveals the truth about people* – Some will be persecuted, and some will persecute. Some will cause trouble, and some will be troubled. Some will show who they are by faith and love, while others will reveal who they are by their lack of faith and love.
* *Persecution reveals the truth about God -* He is just – there will be justice in the end. God guarantees it. God will deal with sin. God does not close His eyes to the evil in the world. A god not angered by sin is not worthy to be worshiped.
  + There will be a reckoning and recognition – Don't lose hope. Continue to do good. Leave room for the wrath of God (Rom. 12:19). God will give relief to you who are troubled and pay back trouble to those who trouble you.

**2 Thess 1:5-7b NIV**

**This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.**

* “Blazing fire and mighty angels” – fire is always a sign of judgment, and notice that He says "powerful" angels, highlighting this attribute of who they are.
* This includes people who know about God and know about the gospel but do not know God nor obey the gospel.
* “Punished with everlasting destruction” – "shut out" from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His might. How do we understand the crime fitting the punishment? The punishment is determined by the person the crime was committed against. For example:

Suppose a high school student punches another student in the class. What happens? The student is given a detention. Suppose during the detention; this boy punches the teacher. What happens? The student gets suspended from school. Suppose on the way home; the same boy punches a policeman on the nose. What happens? He finds himself in jail. Suppose some years later, the very same boy is in a crowd waiting to see the President of the United States. As the President passes by, the boy lunges forward to punch the President. What happens? He is shot dead by the secret service.

In every case, the crime is precisely the same, but the severity of the crime is measured by the one against whom it is committed. What comes from sinning against God? Answer: Everlasting destruction. (Colin Smith) - it was the same action every time, but the greater the person, the greater the offense (crime), and the greater the punishment—the greater the person, the greater the consequence.

* The greatest tragedy in this is that beings made by God, like God, and for God, should spend eternity without God, and they do so because they have rejected God and rebelled against God. They are irrevocably banished from His presence.
* He will also be "marveled at" those who have believed – because we have believed in Jesus Christ.

**Understand God's redemptive purpose for prayer**

**2 Thess 1:11-12 NIV**

**With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and every deed prompted by your faith. 12 We pray this so 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.**

* *Grace that you will persevere* – He is the one who makes you worthy of His calling, and your “worth” of that calling is seen in your perseverance and fruitfulness in Him. God is the one who does this.
* *Grace that you will be empowered –* not everything that you want and everything that you do, but He may bring about every desire for goodness, and every deed that is prompted by your faith. This is a huge prayer andGod is the one who does this.
* *Grace that Jesus will be glorified in you* – this is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ be glorified, this is not a “God” but a specific person who has specific claims that Jesus would be glorified in you. God is the one who does this.
* *Grace that you will be glorified in Him –* when we live in His Grace and live to glorify Him, He will glorify us when He comes back again.God is the one who does this.
* God is the one who does all these things, so we pray to Him and ask Him to do so. In that way He is glorified, and we are satisfied in Him. We just need to ask Him for these things.

**Conclusion and Communion**

* God redeems praise, persecution, and prayer –
  + He uses praise to encourage us, keep us focused, and strengthen us.
  + He uses persecution to show who people are and to show who He is. There will be retribution and recognition.
  + He uses prayer to give us grace to preserve, be empowered, and to glorify Himself in us and through us.
* Transition to communion