

2 Thessalonians 1:1-5

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[0:00] Some of you just sat down, but if you're physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God found in 2 Thessalonians 1, starting in verse 1 and going down to verse 5.

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians, in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting because your faith is greatly enlarged and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater.

Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God for which indeed you are suffering.

You may be seated. As we open up this book, we are reminded that each portion of God's word we come to is written for a purpose.

[1:09] It is written to an intended audience at a specific time for a specific purpose. We find that purpose quite often when we read through books in their entirety and we take just a few moments to consider exactly what it is God is saying.

Much like the book of 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, contains within each chapter a reference to the second coming of Christ. When I looked back at our series throughout 1 Thessalonians, the title of that series, the title of the entirety of that book was Living as if He is Coming.

It is to Live Expecting the Coming and Returning of Jesus Christ. As Paul pens this second letter, he is kind of not changing his intentions but readjusting his audience.

Because they had let the reality of his coming sink into their mind and sink into their hearts and had begun to adapt their life almost to the extreme.

There are extremities found throughout Christianity and some who believe that Jesus Christ may come someday, that he might come as he anticipated. But yet they believe that this life, maybe not by the words they say but definitely by the lives they live, they believe that this life is all that there is and they are trying to cling and hold on to all that this world has to give them.

[2:30] And as they seek to do so, they are not living in light of his coming for they are not storing up for themselves treasures in heaven, but rather they are more concerned about the treasures they have on earth.

And so that's really what they believe because, friend, listen, we do not believe what we recite in creed and words. We believe what we live out in actions and in life.

That is what we really believe. But then there are those who really believe that Christ is coming again and since he is coming, they have denounced all worldly things, all worldly matters, anything that has a hint of worldliness, and they have cast it all aside and they have so isolated and separated themselves that they said, well, I'm just going to stand right here and wait on Jesus to come.

Those are the two extremes. Now we have seen and we have declared this over and over again that to live in light of his coming is not to denounce all worldly things, for all good gifts come from the Father above.

And what he has given to us, he has entrusted to us for some of it, for usefulness and for our own pleasure, for he desires to give us the delight of our hearts, it tells us. In Psalm 145, it says that God desires to give the pleasures of those who love him and seek him and long for him, and he wants to bless them.

[3:45] It tells us, we answer this question, making our way through the book of Job, that God does delight in us, and that is an astounding reality, that the Lord Almighty who is holy, holy, holy delights in us who are not.

But some of it that he gives to us is just seeking to meet a need. Some of it he gives to us so that we can use it to proclaim his glory and to display his worthiness to a watching world.

Paul is writing this letter because many within the church of the Thessalonians had swung the pendulum too far. We will see the reality that there are some who just quit work.

It is from this book that we will find that if a man does not work, he does not eat. That is good counsel, by the way, and that is a good place to say amen. Because if a man does not work, a man should not eat. That is good counsel that this world has forsaken.

And we would find that here in the pages, but what we fail to realize sometimes the reason they were not working, they said, well, if Jesus is coming, why go to work? And so Paul writes this in response.

[5:00] You find it in the last two verses of the second chapter. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace.

Here's the whole reason for writing this. Comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. So if I had to put a title over 2 Thessalonians, it would be strengthened for the work.

That he has strengthened us and equipped us for the work he has given for us to do. And how do we live in light of his coming, but yet continue to maintain the work we have been given?

Strengthened for the work. I've said this before, and it is a reality that many pastors wrestle with that we are working ourselves out of a job.

The old adage is that pastors never retire because the moment you retire, there's another church that could use you. And you understand that. You know a number of pastors that have, quote, retired, and then fill in the pulpit somewhere.

[6:03] And fill in the pulpit is just a good way of saying they're not calling you, they're just having you come preach. So that means you're pastoring again. That's just a new terminology. And it goes on and on and on again. And so pastors never retire.

And that's fine. And I understand that. But also pastors have no job in heaven. I mean, who am I going to tell in all eternity about the glories of Jesus Christ when you can go there and see him yourself?

Who am I going to expound the writings of Paul when you can sit down with Paul by the crystal sea? Who am I going to help understand the mysteries of the New Testament or the Old Testament when you can meet those saints and walk the golden streets with them?

So there is no occupation for me in heaven. That's why I feel like God has given me a broom to push and I will sweep the streets of gold and I will be content therein. By the way, that will be a welcome relief at sometimes just to push a broom.

It's not a bad thing. For I don't think there will be much dust there either. But in reality, each one of us are working ourselves out of a job for our job as believers.

[7:05] We have all been given a work to do prepared beforehand for us to walk therein. The God who created you and formed you and knit you together in your mother's womb.

The God who called you and loved you and redeemed you through the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, says that he has fashioned good works for you to do before the foundations of the world were laid.

And you only have this life to do those works. For in heaven, those works are not.

And the greatest work, we've already seen it, is to display the glory of the one who called us sometimes within the realm of our daily occupation. Sometimes it's how you do your job.

Sometimes it's how you live your life. Sometimes it's how you eat your meals in public. Sometimes it's how you behave different ways. I used to say this, and I'm constantly reminded for the years when I coached baseball.

[8:05] I coached a lot of sports of our kids growing up. Baseball was the one I really knew, for it was the sport that I grew up with. And I knew the rules of baseball. I know them real well. I used to keep them in my back pocket. I did. For one, I like to argue with umpires.

Okay? I just did. Most of them didn't know it, and it was kind of my habit. But your pastor's wife would sit behind a dugout, not to encourage me. Sometimes she became the dugout mother just to

rein me in a little bit.

Because as I was walking out of the dugout, I tell you this, the very last thing I would hear as I stepped out of the dugout, I'd say, Tom, as soon as she heard me say, Tom, she'd say, remember you're a pastor. And she would follow me down the fence going, remember you're a pastor, remember you're a pastor, remember you're a pastor.

Because she knew that I was about to argue a point that I didn't want to make a scene about. And there literally had been times, I think she was praying, that I got to home plate ump and all I could do was give him a hug.

I remember that clearly. I hugged that man and said, I'm praying for you. And I went back. I don't think he gave me a call the rest of the game, but still, I was really irate.

[9:03] But I had to remember why. Because sometimes the greatest way we display the glory of Christ is how we respond in public. But this life is the only life we have been given to display his glory, for his glory will be on full display.

It will illuminate all of eternity. And so how are we equipped for the work of displaying the glory of the Savior who redeemed us?

Paul introduces that here in these opening five verses. And he shows them that they are a well-positioned people. I mean, they're well-positioned.

To do the work that God has given them to do. By the fact, when we get to the end of this book, we will hear that repeated refrain. To be equipped to do good works. To do good works. To do good works. And they are well-positioned to do so.

More than anyone else, they are positioned to do the work in Thessalonica of displaying the glory of Christ that no one else could do. When Paul went to Thessalonica, he was not necessarily leaving a town on good terms.

[10:09] He had just been run out of a town. You can see it in Acts chapter 16. When you get to Acts chapter 17, you see his entrance into Thessalonica. And he was only there for a short time. The jury is still out.

Was he there three months? Was he there six months? We don't know. But we do know that he found a man named Jason. And he was in Jason's home. And he was teaching. He went to the synagogue of the Jews. It was in Thessalonica.

And he proclaimed the gospel to them. And much like always, they're like, oh, that sounds good. And then all these other people, these Gentiles, came coming to Christ. And the Jews got upset. And the Jews were a little mad.

And then some people from the town he had just left came over. And they incited an angry mob. And they went to Jason's house. I'm giving you a really condensed version of it. Long story short, Paul is run out of town. And there's this new church.

These new believers. And Paul leaves them behind. And he's gone. And he ends up going to Athens. And we see the sermon on Mars Hill. And all this other, the good stuff that happens. As they're following him. But he is so distraught about what's going on.

[11:08] He had left Timothy behind. And it tells us in 1 Thessalonians. That he really was going. He just couldn't even focus on ministry. Until he knew how they were doing. And it wasn't until they got there.

And they gave news. The church is still there. And he's like, okay. Great. And there were elders in place. And leaders in place. But it was a brand new church. And Paul didn't stick around long. And Paul knew that the work that was going to take place in Thessalonica. Which, by the way, was one of the free cities in Roman Empire. Which means that there was no Roman legion stationed there.

They could govern themselves. They had their own rules. So he gave them a lot of freedom. It was a very important town. A very important trade town. But it was a very worldly town. We would call it any town in America.

It had this great influx of people from all parts of the Roman Empire. And there was this small church there that Paul left behind.

[12:11] And Paul said, you're well positioned. You're right where you need to be. You can do the work. How are they so well positioned? How can they do the work that God's given them to do?

Because, listen, it isn't just the believers in Thessalonica that were well positioned. Paul tells us, if you follow that story, by the time you get to him standing up on Mars Hill in Acts 17 and following,

what does he say?

That God has appointed the time and the place and the location for every individual that has ever lived. You ever thought about that? Why are you where you're at today?

You say, ah, well, I made a series of choices. That's great that you made those choices. Isn't it astounding how God gives you the ability to make a choice that is right in line with his purposes? That God in his sovereignty knows exactly where you are going to be, when you're going to be there, and he has put you there intentionally.

We're too often worried about where we're going next as opposed to being focused on where he's got us now. And the intentionality of God of putting us in that place to accomplish a work that he has well positioned you to do the work he's giving you to do today.

[13:27] And nobody could be more well positioned than you are to do that work. Nobody. And that work wouldn't be any greater if you were somewhere else. I used to, when I first went into ministry, I was pastoring a little church in Normandy.

You know that First Baptist Church in Normandy. I still love that church. That little town down there used to drive me nuts, just to be honest with you. The last census they had in Normandy, I think the population was 199 people. Now, I'm an extrovert by nature.

And I would walk outside the doors of that church, and I would walk about a mile or a mile and a half just to try to find somebody to talk to. It was the quietest church, the quietest town. There was nothing going on there. And I was stir-crazy and miserable, to say the least.

I was a 26-year-old pastor. By the time I was full-time, I was a 28-year-old pastor who, you say, well, I had a lot of activity at home because we had small kids at home, and the world was busy there. But, you know, I was just, man, it's just kind of driving me nuts.

And I was always thinking, it's got to be better somewhere else. It's got to be better. And there's always these dreams. You always think and think and think. And then you come to this point where you realize, but this is where God wants me now. And then he moved me here, and this is where God wants me now.

[14:36] By the way, side note, this is the busiest rural church building I have ever seen in my life, and nobody in the world. So God says, okay, you wanted activity, here you go. And I try to explain that to people, but it is wild.

But you are well-positioned in the work that he has given you. How are you so positioned? Look at what the text says. It tells you that you are well-positioned, much like the church in Thessalonica, because of the bond we share.

Notice what it says, Paul and Silvanus and Timothy. Now, Silvanus and Silas. You remember Silas. He was the one that was in prison with Paul. They were singing in the Philippian jailer, Comes Christ, Acts 16. You remember that, right?

They were there rejoicing. And so Silas is with him. Silas is encouraging. And so you have Paul and Silvanus and Timothy. These are not only the authors of the letter, those who are penning this, but these are the ones that they're connected to.

These are the ones that they share a bond with. And Paul is introducing not only himself, but he is introducing the connection they have with one another. I mean, think about this for just a moment.

[15:40] This church is well-connected to Paul and Silas and Timothy. Paul, the church planner.

Silas, the companion of missionary journey. And Timothy, the one who would stay a little bit longer than Paul. He was more of a pastor mindset. He was a stayer where Paul was a traveler.

But to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I see this repetition. God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, grace and peace to you through God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So they're saying not only do you know us, but you are united to us through the fatherhood of God and the lordship of Jesus Christ. Not only are we writing to you in the name of God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, we are writing to you who are in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And we see it in the next verse. It says, we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren. We quite often jump over that word because it is a word that is often used in today's church when we do not remember the name of the male individual that we're coming up to.

[16:54] Brother, how you doing? I'm doing great. How are you, brother? We're all good. Oh, our sister, how are you doing? It's when we're kind of a name slips us. It's easy to say that. But here when they write brethren, they are not writing something like, oh, we can't remember your name.

Now, this is a telling word because he is writing to a church that is mostly composed of Gentile individuals. And for the average Jew to be a brethren was to be someone of national identity, someone with the same roots, someone that is connected a little deeper than just a fellowship with one another in a chance encounter.

Here, Paul is writing to people that he only spent three to six months with, but they had come to Christ and had come to salvation. So because of that, he gives this intimate connection with them. He says to you, our brethren. Don't miss that word. And it is the wonder of this reality that in Christ, we are immediately grafted into the family of God and we no longer stand and isolate. And it is a bond that is not identifiable by traits. It's not identifiable by birthplace or birth lineage or any of those things.

[18:14] It is a bond that is formed much greater and stronger. It is a bond that is fashioned through the blood of Christ where there is neither male nor female nor Jew nor Gentile nor Greek nor free nor slave.

It is a bond that exceeds all barriers. It doesn't mean that it removes our identity for we are perfectly and wonderfully and fearfully made. And we are made in the image of God.

But it is the bond that we share that is so much beyond who we are as individuals. It is a bond of being built up to one another as spiritual stones, it tells us in the book of 1 Peter.

And it is a bond that positions us to be useful for him. And for when we stand, we do not stand in isolation no matter how large or small the congregation may be.

He is writing to a very small congregation of believers in a major metropolis area that is really kind of outnumbered and outwitted and outthought. And they'd already seen Jason being kind of dragged by the mob.

[19:20] So there's some angry crowd there. Paul's been run off. And what he is telling is, you're not alone. You're not. And he writes this local church.

That doesn't mean that we ought to all be members of the, quote, big capital C church, the universal church. There are a lot of people that want to be, I'm a part of the universal church, but they never darken the doors of a local church.

The greatest way to find your connection to the universal church is to be involved in the local church. And it is to walk in the mess of that reality that you are connected.

When you look around and someone beside you names the name of Jesus Christ, then you're joined to them. You say, well, pastor, there's some people in this room I don't want to be joined to. I've got news for you. There's some people in this room that don't want to be joined to you or I either. We're not all that great. We have weaknesses. We have failures. And we have mistakes.

[20:22] And we have baggage. And we bring stuff. But in Christ, we're united to one another. Which means now we, all those one another passages, we get to bear someone else's burdens and someone bears ours.

And we have a responsibility for them and they have a responsibility for us. Paul is encouraging them because of the bond they share. They are well positioned.

They are just a well placed ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ in Thessalonica. They're there. And they have this bond that only comes through Christ. And that bond does something because what it does is it produces growth. But look at the growth that they exhibit.

He says, we ought to always give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting. He said, we ought to thank God for you. And it's only proper that we do so. Why? Because your faith is greatly enlarged. Here's the first growth.

[21:25] Now we will say, well, the church in Thessalonica is growing. How are they growing? Oh, they're growing in leaps and bounds. Really, how many have they baptized? That's not what Paul is saying. Paul says they're growing in faith. Too often in our metrics of our society, we measure the wrong things.

Sitting on my desk right now, and I'm not contrary to it. I will do it. I'm not one of those people. But sitting on my desk right now is what they call the ACP, Annual Church Profile Report.

It comes to me through the Tennessee Baptist Convention. Now I will fill it out. And the reason I will fill it out is because by filling that out, it gives me the opportunity to attend the Southern Baptist Convention as a messenger.

And as a messenger, that means I have a voice. And as a voice, I have a right to question. This past week, I had about a four-hour meeting with someone from the Tennessee Baptist Mission

Board. I had some very tough questions. Now the only reason I can ask those questions is because they know that we support them.

And now he's confronted with having to answer those questions. And that's okay. And it was not a derogatory meeting. It was just a, okay, let me ask you some things I've got to ask you. Thank you for telling me things you're excited about because I've realized a lot of people like to say what they're excited about.

[22:31] And I say, now let me tell you some things I'm concerned about. But I have that right to do it because I am a pastor of a church that supports it. Therefore, I will maintain that. But on my desk right now is the ACP report.

The ACP report wants to know what was our given for the fiscal year. How much of that percentage did we give? How much went to missions? How much went to Annie Armstrong, Lottie Moon, Golden Offering?

How many people did we baptize? How many people did we have enrolled in Sunday school class? You say, are they trying to judge us? Oh, they were trying to oversight us. No, no, they can't. Okay, it's okay. By the way, I don't have anything to hide.

I don't mind doing that. And once you're in enrollment and all these other things, it gives enrollment for Women's Missionary Union, WMU. It gives enrollment for choir. It gives enrollment. You know there's one line that is not on there. How many people are growing in faith?

Be it the first growth that Paul acknowledged where they were growing in faith. It never asks how many people read the Bible this year.

[23:27] It doesn't ask that. We've measured the wrong things. But he says, your growth that you're exhibiting is you're growing in faith.

How do you know they're growing in faith? Well, if you were to go to 1 Thessalonians, you would find in the first chapter of 1 Thessalonians that the gospel had went forth from them into every place around them.

That takes faith. By the way, if you're such a small minority in a major city and the gospel is going out from you into every region around you, it's because you believe what you have is the good news and you have the faith to tell someone about it.

Now, they were a very young church. I mean, maybe three months at discipleship training is all they had. I don't know. But it's amazing when you understand that. They had the faith and they were growing in their faith.

They didn't even have the Word of God. They didn't have Genesis to Revelation like we do and they didn't even have Genesis to Malachi because those scrolls would have been kept in the synagogue and the Jews were opposing them. But what they had were the letters that were coming back and forth from other believers and the encouragement of other pastors that were going through there.

[24:33] And they were growing in their faith and they were excited about it. And not only were they growing in faith, but it looks also what it says, and your love for one another is increasing daily. So maybe these are the two metrics that we ought to measure.

How are we growing in faith and how are we growing in love? Do we love one another today more than we did yesterday? And that's not a ooey-gooey type of love.

We're not talking about feelings here. I'm not asking, do you feel like loving everybody in a way? I'm not talking about our feelings and all these things. I'm going through pre-marriage counseling with a couple right now.

And if any of you have been through there, you know what I'm talking about. We're going to an intentional love. Are you choosing to love today more than you chose to love yesterday the believers that God has connected you with?

And why is that important? Jesus says by this, will all people know that you love me? By your love for one another. So if you're going around and saying, man, I love the Lord Jesus Christ.

[25:31] What a beautiful name it is. Show me how beautiful it is by how much you love the people around you. That's what Christ says. And if his name is beautiful, and beside you or around you sits someone who bears the name of Christ, then we ought to love them.

And look at the growth they exhibit. Because by the way, this growth was well positioning them to do the work God was calling them to do. This ought to be amazing to you. Because there is no discussion here of theological growth.

There's no discussion here of scripture memorization. It is growing in faith and love. Why? Because the number one reason we give for not doing anything for the gospel is, well, when I know enough, I will.

That's a lack of faith. These people didn't have the Bible, but they had enough faith to say, well, if the Lord has saved me and redeemed me, then he says he will speak through me, so I guess I'm just going to take him at his word and see what he says.

I'm going to allow him to use me, and it's going to be his words and not mine. And then the faith to think he would use someone like them. In our day of professionalization, we are told, no, leave that to the professionals.

[26:48] Leave that to the trained and the qualified. That is not the trained and the qualified. You can have all the training and the qualifications and all the letters and numbers behind your name that you want to, and all of a sudden you step onto the work, and you step onto the field, and sometimes the greatest training you get is not the one found in the higher educational institutions.

They can give you the knowledge, but they may not give you the equipment. I'm not saying that we shouldn't seek to know the word of God better. We absolutely ought to.

We ought to do the work. We ought to study the word. But the thing that well positions us is the faith and the love that we have for one another. That is the thing that ought to be growing.

As you study the word, and as you get into the word, and you read it, and you consume it, and you're looking at it, and you want to know it in its fullness, and you want to know it in its clarity, then do it this way. Want to know it so that it would grow your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not that it would grow your knowledge in the words on the page. Because if you know the words, but you don't know the Lord who spoke the words, what does it matter?

[28:03] And as you read and study the words, and may it increase your love for the brethren around you and the sisters around you, and may it cause you to be well positioned to do the work he's called you to do. And finally, we notice that.

Here's just the beginning of that work. Here's the mission they have been set upon. Here in just a short time, we'll be sending a team out from us that'll be on a mission trip.

Brother Mike has been doing a tremendous amount of work, trying to, even this morning, I was speaking with him, and trying to figure out exactly what it is you're going to be doing when you get there, and trying to stay on top of it. And the organization has been phenomenal.

I've been reached out to by the Tennessee Disaster Relief, and then all these things coming at me, and it's just amazing to see all the work and the preparations going into it. And I can assure you, I know you'll have a meeting tonight, those of you going, and Brother Mike will meet with you, and you will know everything that he knows, and he'll give that to you.

And I know that by the time you go, because of his administration skills, and thankfully it is he that is doing it, and not me, because if it's me, I was like, I don't know, we're going to do something when we get there. But by the time you get there, he will tell you exactly what you're going to do.

[29:11] And that's phenomenal. Because we all need to know the mission we have been given, and I love that Paul here makes the transition, and says, here's the mission that you have been given to do.

Verse 4 says, therefore we ourselves speak proudly of you among the church of God for your, he says, this is what we boast in. I mean, this is what makes Paul boast. Not because they know everything that he's taught them, not because they can recite everything he's written to them.

He says, this is what I'm proud of. For your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. And notice here too, Paul is not praying that they would be delivered from the persecutions or be delivered from the afflictions, but he is boasting of their perseverance in them.

He left the church, this newborn church in a very hostile environment. And he's boasting in their perseverance in the midst of those.

In the midst of those trials, in the midst of those tribulations, in the midst of those persecutions and afflictions. I mean, don't we wish there were words that were used different? I mean, did it have to be persecutions and afflictions?

[30:35] It can have been mild discomforts. Affliction just gives you a word of, kind of makes you, kind of pull back from it a little bit. That's exactly what was going on.

Because Jason was left behind, by the way. Why is he boasting in that? Why? Because this is the mission they've been given. God had appointed them to stay in the midst of that.

Why? This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment. It doesn't seem right. You say, this is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment. What do you mean by that? Does it mean that God is judging them? No. He says their endurance and their perseverance in the midst of that is a plain indication of God's judgment.

What in the world does that mean? Well, it simply means this, that when the judgment of God comes, the people there in Thessalonica will not be able to say we didn't know.

For there had been an ambassador, a light set upon the hill. There had been the salt that had been placed there. The witness of Christ was present in the church and therefore God's judgment upon the city will be just.

[31 : 41] It was, as Paul says elsewhere, to those who are being saved, we are in a realm of life. But to those who are perishing, we are in a realm of death.

It means it is the job and the mission of the believer to be in a realm of life to those who are being redeemed and an aroma of death to those who are being judged.

Now, that's a hard thing to say, but our life ought to look so distinct and so different that people are not neutral when they experience us. that everybody smells something.

That our nearness to Christ ought to be sweet to those who are being redeemed and it ought to be offensive to those who want nothing to do with him. Neutrality has no place in the life of the believer for then we are not being a good ambassador to the righteous judgment of God.

We ought to live in such a manner that it is a plain indication of God's righteousness. That the world would not be able to say we did not know.

[32 : 56] We never saw. For it will tell us by the time we get to the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians and I've said this before, that those who deny the truth and reject the truth, that God will give them over to a debased mind so that they will believe the lie.

By the way, that is a good testimony. I believe in scripture and it's a scripture verse that I always use when people tell me, say, well, I'm just going to wait to the end and if I see the church raptured then I'll believe in Jesus Christ.

And I say, well, the word of God says you won't be able to. You say, what do you mean I won't be able to? It says that you're going to be given a debased mind so as to believe the lie because those who had the opportunity to hear the truth but rejected the truth, there will be no other opportunity given to them.

Well, how would that be possible? Because there was a church there. And I wonder if Fort Trace Baptist Church has the same impact on our community. If we are a plain indication of God's righteous judgment, not that we are being condemning and wagging our finger but that our presence is radiating out so much so that people have said there is something about that group of people there.

There's something different about them. And then he goes on. So that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God for which indeed you are suffering.

[34 : 12] On September 19th, we will be having our church family picnic and it will be in place of our fall retreat. We're not doing a fall retreat this year. We're doing a one-day event. It will be at Henry Horton Pavilion 2 right next to the river.

More information will come about that. But our theme for that will be walk worthy. This verse falls right into that. So I hope that you plan to join us. I want you to be praying about that now. We will have a theme and teaching and all that goes along with it and we'll have a great time.

I don't know if you noticed in the announcements we eat a lot in September. Okay? We start our Wednesday night meals in September and then we just keep on eating. So that's a good thing. It's not a bad thing. Eating's not a bad thing. So anyway, fast between now and then you can eat in September.

But it says here that that endurance, that perseverance is so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God. Isn't it amazing? Stop and think about this.

Is there anything within us naturally apart from Christ that makes us worthy for the kingdom? Now the answer to that is absolutely no.

[35 : 16] I'm not worthy of the kingdom of God. We like the sinner that Christ tells the story of ought to beat our chest and say woe is me for I am a sinner condemned unclean.

My offenses are great. I have fallen. I'm unworthy. The resounding song of heaven is worthy is the lamb.

He alone is worthy. Nowhere do you find in the book of Revelations will anyone ever turn to someone beside them and say worthy are you for being here for there is no worth in any one of us. I believe when we see him as he is we will understand that there was nothing inside of us naturally that would make us worthy of being in that place and our voice will probably be the loudest voice saying worthy are you oh lamb who was slain.

We will gather around his throne and see him in his glory and proclaim his worthiness. There is nothing before Christ that makes me worthy of the kingdom and there is nothing before Christ that makes any man worthy of the kingdom for we are all sinners condemned unclean.

[36:36] There is nothing and no manner in which we can live before salvation to make ourselves worthy but the wonder of the gospel is that the moment you are redeemed and you are sealed until the day of redemption with the Holy Spirit then as Jesus prayed there in the gospel of John you are filled with the fullness of God for Jesus as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit come and make their abode within you then that which is worthy to be in the kingdom of heaven lives within you and you now have the mind of Christ you have a heart of flesh you have lives to live for his glory and you can live out what he has put in and the reality of Christ inside of us ought to cause us to live in a manner that is worthy on our own absolutely not but through the indwelling presence of Christ woe be unto us if we do not for he is worthy and yet he chose to dwell within us so that we after knowing him as our Lord and Savior can live in a manner worthy worthy and that's where we have the fruits of the Spirit that come in we no longer have to live according to the fruits and desires of the flesh but we can surrender ourselves to Christ and live according to the Spirit for the glory of Christ may we live worthy and be counted worthy not because of our own actions not because of our own abilities but because there is something in someone new inside of us who is living out his life among us and we are bearing in our body the marks of Christ and he is worthy and may the world see the worthiness of the lamb in the life of Billy

Joe why because I am well positioned to do the work he's called me to do so too are you even if that work is in the midst of the mess you never wanted because sometimes in the midst of it is where the worthiness is really seen let's pray father we thank you for this day we praise you for the opportunity of gathering but we know greater than our gathering is our equipping to depart so lord as we have come and we have heard your word lord I pray that its truth would continue to take root in our hearts and in our minds and that when we leave here we would leave for your glory we would leave for your purposes and we would follow you with all that we have and all that we do and we ask it in Christ's name amen may may may may may