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Leading Thoughts on Eschatology in the Epistles to the Thessalonians

VI

In our discussions of the leading eschatological thoughts in the Epistles to the Thessalonians we now proceed to a new section. In the previous installments we have noted that the Lord will return suddenly, as a thief in the night, 1 Thess. 5:1-3; that He will not return before the great Antichrist will have been revealed, 2 Thess. 2:1-13. But the apostle also shows the purpose for which the Lord will return, namely, for vengeance upon the unbelievers and for the glorification of the believers. This truth is stressed particularly in the section 2 Thess. 1:3-12, to which we now turn for further study. This passage, moreover, constitutes one of the great eschatological pericopes of the traditional Church Year, the Epistle for the 26th Sunday after Trinity.

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth." V. 3. Paul begins his Second Epistle with an expression of thanks, as is his custom in all of his letters addressed to congregations, with the sole exception of the Epistle to the Galatians. Ordinarily he says merely, "I give thanks," or "We give thanks." Cp. 1 Thess. 1:2; 1 Cor. 1:4; here, however, he emphasizes that he is "bound to thank God." This obligation rests upon him in view of the wholesome conditions prevailing in the congregation which he portrays in the verses following. God's grace had accomplished great things in that congregation. The plural in "We are bound," *οφειλομεν*, is not the *pluralis auctoris*, but Paul always has in mind, as in the First Epistle, his helpers Silvanus and Timothy, v. 1. Cp. 1 Thess. 1:2; 2:18; 4:8. With this frank acknowledgment of the wholesome conditions in the congregation Paul is sure to make the heart of his readers more willing to accept his exhortations. He expresses his joy over them and his love toward them by the loving term *brethren*. But he does not thank the Thessalonians, for they are not entitled to his thanks; he thanks God on their account. God alone is the originator of the good which Paul lauds in the Thessalonians. And God the Father is meant specifically in these and similar expressions of thanks. Cp. Col. 1:3; Eph. 1:3. Such deserved thanks for his Christians Paul "always" brings to his God. This "always" must not be weakened into a mere "often," for Paul is actually occupied therewith without ceasing, 1 Thess. 1:2, even as he admonishes all Christians to pray without ceasing, 1 Thess. 5:17. He gives expression to his gratitude in spite of the fact that

later in the Epistle he may be compelled to criticize and rebuke his readers, as is the case in chapters 2 and 3 of the Second Epistle, in chap. 1:2-10 of the First Epistle, and in his Epistles to the Corinthians, whom he had to rebuke severely and at great length, 1 Cor. 1:4-9. Let this serve as a model for all preachers: They should acknowledge the good that is to be found in their congregations, despite the deficiencies and the shortcomings in the congregation as a whole and in individual cases.

Paul proceeds: "As it is meet," as is right and proper, namely, that we give thanks for your sake. This is not a superfluous addition to "we are bound." "We are bound" emphasizes the duty to give thanks, subjectively considered; from within, Paul feels the duty to give thanks; however, the clause "as it is meet" emphasizes the duty to give thanks, objectively considered. It is required by the circumstances to give thanks for such manifestation of grace. In the following sentence the cause of the thanks expressed is stated; Paul gives thanks because their faith grows and their love increases. He had praised their faith and love also in the First Epistle, chap. 1:3; but here he not only says that their faith is great and on the increase, but that it "groweth exceedingly." Ὑπερανέανειν is a *hapax legomenon*. Paul frequently uses compounds with ὑπέρ for the purpose of intensifying the idea. Ἀνέανειν is used both transitively and intransitively, the compound only in the latter sense. Paul does not only say that their love is great but that it is constantly increasing, πλεονάζει, it grows greater from day to day. His wishes and admonitions in the First Epistle have been gloriously fulfilled, chap. 3:2; 4:10. In spite of suffering, their faith and love, which Timothy had praised, 1 Thess. 3:6, had grown stronger. It should be noted that he does not say "your charity," but "the charity of everyone of you all." Thus the praise he accords them is emphasized. The growth in charity is in evidence not only in the congregation as a whole, but in every individual member. To "charity" Paul adds the modifier "toward each other." That refers to their fellow Christians in Thessalonica. He is speaking of the brotherly love of Christians. In 1 Thess. 1:3 Paul had named a third virtue, "patience of hope." He now refers to this same virtue in a somewhat different form.

"So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure." V. 4. This sentence is connected with the preceding one by means of ὥστε. According to Greek grammar ὥστε with the Indicative indicates actual result, with the Infinitive, hypothetical result. However, even in classical Greek perhaps more exceptions to this rule than agreements with it are to be found; in the New Testament the Infinitive is used promiscuously to denote

either actual or hypothetical result. The growth of the Thessalonians in their Christianity causes the apostle and his co-workers to rejoice to such an extent that they not only thank God but also speak of it before men. They cannot help themselves, they do so spontaneously without being urged to do so, αὐτοὺς ἡμᾶς. According to the best text the form ἐνκαυχᾶσθαι is used, which is stronger than the simple καυχᾶσθαι, and with ἐν ὑμῖν the object of glorying is indicated: "we ourselves glory in you," for ἐνκαυχᾶσθαι is construed with ἐν and really means to place one's glory in something, to glory concerning some matter. Cp. 1 Cor. 1:31; 3:21. At first glance these passages in his Epistles to the Corinthians seem to conflict with what Paul writes here. Yet he does not glory in what the Thessalonians have accomplished as human beings, but he praises the work of God in them, as v. 3 clearly shows. Cp. 1 Thess. 2:19, 20. And he glories in the Thessalonians "in the churches of God." He has in mind the congregations in Achaia, among whom he was laboring at the time, Corinth and its sister congregations. Cp. the introductory questions and Rom. 16:1. For that reason he also uses the plural. In the words which follow he indicates in greater detail the object of his glorying: he glories in the Thessalonians because of their patience and their faith. Both are intimately connected, as is indicated by the fact that only one article is used. "Patience," ὑπομονή, is placed first, because it is especially worthy of praise that the Thessalonians remained firm not only in one assault but persevered patiently in spite of repeated attacks. The ultimate root of their patience is faith, and πίστις is to be understood here as certainty, firm conviction, courageous assurance. They look upon their tribulations not as an excessive burden, they endure it patiently. Nor do they waver in their faith. In spite of all trials their confidence and trust in their God and Savior remains unmoved. And this courageous loyal faith the apostle holds up as a praiseworthy example to those congregations who have not yet been confronted with such trials and difficulties. The patience of the Thessalonians was not a stoical indifference, an apathetical submission to what could not change, but the joyful and firm conviction that God would finally come to their rescue. Cp. Rev. 13:10 on the expression used here: "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints"; on the subject matter cp. 1 Pet. 1:6-9. This patience and this faith they exhibited in all of their "persecutions and tribulations." The two expressions have slightly different meanings: θλίψις is more general; tribulation, distress. The word emphasizes that the suffering is painful and distressing. Διωγμός on the other hand is more specific; it designates the immediate hostility on the part of the adversaries, persecution. In αἱς we have the well-known Greek attraction in place of αὐς

(or ὧν, since in the New Testament ἀνέχεσθαι is used only with the Genitive; the Accusative is used only in classical Greek; and the present tense shows that the persecutions against the Thessalonians were still going on at that time. They must have broken out afresh, for in the First Epistle they are described as having ceased. Cp. chap. 2:14, where the Aorist is used.

"Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." V.5. In this verse Paul passes judgment on the stand of his readers portrayed in v. 4. Their patience in tribulations is unto them a seal of their future glory. The first sentence is appositional, in the Nominative, and the subject to which this apposition refers is the preceding statement regarding the persecutions and tribulations "that ye endure." The thought is: That you endure all persecutions and tribulations patiently and in faith is an indication of the righteous judgment of God. By the "righteous judgment of God" the future judgment at the return of Christ is evidently meant, not a present judgment, as some interpreters assume. That is proved first by the use of the definite article, which points to the well-known judgment which is in a class by itself; and secondly by the context, vv. 6-10. That was also Luther's interpretation: "Welches anzeigt, dasz Gott recht richten wird." The great world judgment is meant. But what does the apostle mean to say? In what respect is patience in tribulations an indication, a proof, of the coming righteous judgment of God? The line of thought is this: If believers for the sake of their faith endure the persecution of the unbelievers, it will appear evident that God will be a righteous judge. He does not want the distinction between faith and unbelief to become doubtful. For He permits, on the one hand, the unbelievers to inflict tribulation upon the believers, thus indicating the glaring difference between the two; and, on the other hand, He gives to His believers an opportunity to prove by patient endurance of their afflictions that a remarkable change has occurred in them when they became Christians, that they really love the Word and the kingdom of God. Both the hatred of the unbelievers and the patience of the believers will call for a final judgment, when faith as well as unbelief will be duly recompensed. That this is the connection is shown by the purpose clause which follows; likewise by vv. 6 and 7. Cp. also Phil. 1:28, where we find the closely related term ἐνδοξία; cp. also Luke 16:25.

The infinitive clause introduced by εἰς states the outcome of the "righteous judgment of God," its result as far as the believers are concerned; that they "may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God." All believers, having patiently endured persecutions and

tribulations, shall be counted worthy, judged, declared worthy of the kingdom of God; they shall obtain this kingdom, which is not only the object of their longing desire, but for which they also suffer, as Paul adds. Their willing suffering of tribulation proves the sincerity of their love of Christ and the fervor of their desire to be and remain partakers of His kingdom. The term "kingdom of God" invariably denotes that kingdom which God has established on earth through Christ and which will find its glorious consummation on the Last Day. 1 Thess. 2:12. Paul does not attribute to the sufferings of the Christians any meritorious value. No one can earn the kingdom of God either by works or by sufferings. The preposition "for," *ὑπὲρ*, merely designates the object "over" which, in reference, in loving relationship to which, they suffer, 1 Thess. 2:1. It is God's will to lead all who suffer for the sake of His Word and kingdom to eternal glory. That is to be His gracious reward for their patience in tribulation, and therefore they are to glory in their tribulations. Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-5; 8:17, 18; 2 Cor. 4:17, 18; 2 Tim. 2:22. The righteousness of God will exalt the patient believers so that they are citizens in His kingdom. What a powerful comfort for the Thessalonians and at the same time an urgent exhortation to continue in patient endurance!

"Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you." V. 6. This verse and the subsequent verses prove the statement of v. 5 that the readers suffering for the kingdom of God shall be counted worthy of it and shall possess and enjoy it. The apostle speaks hypothetically, *εἰτε*, provided, if so be that, if indeed, not in order to express any doubt, but to make his statement the more positive. Cp. on this use of *εἰτε* Rom. 8:9, 17. The conclusion is irrefutable, being founded on the very nature of God. It is impossible that the righteous God should not judge between those that trouble the Thessalonians and those who are being troubled. He must effect a change whereby the troublers become the troubled and those troubled obtain rest. The expression "seeing it is a righteous thing" points back to the "righteous judgment" v. 5. Paul stresses the stern justice of God which deals with man according to the law of retribution (*ius talionis*). Cp. Rom. 2:1-10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 6:8, 9; Col. 3:24. The preposition *παρά* implies a local reference to God's judgment throne: with God, before God the Judge. Cp. Rom. 2:13; Gal. 3:11. God's righteousness makes it imperative that He "recompense tribulation to them that trouble you." *Recompense*, *ἀνταποδοῦναι* denotes here the punitive retribution; in 1 Thess. 3:9 it is used of rendering thanks for God's blessing. With what measure they mete, it shall be measured to them again.

Matt. 7:2. In close connection with this statement the other side is brought out in the next verse.

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels." V.7. According to His righteousness God will "recompense tribulation to them that trouble you." This same righteousness moves Him to give rest to the troubled Thessalonians. "Recompense" is to be supplied from v.6. Ἀνεσις, literally the relaxing of what had been tense, e.g., a bow, is metaphorically used in the sense of refreshment, relief, rest, in contrast to trouble. Cp. 2 Cor. 7:5; 8:13; it is a synonym of ἀνάψυξις, refreshing. Acts 3:19. The term describes the glory of God's kingdom negatively considered as a deliverance from tribulation and persecution, a release from sorrow and pain, rest for the weary after the restlessness of this life. Paul could hardly have chosen a more suitable term in addressing the persecuted and suffering Thessalonians. It promised to them a complete reversal of their present condition. Cp. Luke 16:25; Heb. 4:9; Rev. 14:13; 21:4. The positive side of the heavenly glory is described vv. 10 and 12.

God will give this rest to the Thessalonians "with us." Paul includes himself and his co-workers Silvanus and Timothy with the troubled and persecuted longing for rest; cp. 3:2; 1 Thess. 2:2; Acts 17:5-9. This twofold recompense for troublers and troubled will take place "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed." That is the occasion for which Paul in the letters to the Thessalonians usually employs the term παρουσία, presence, arrival, advent; so chap. 2:1; 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15. Here he uses another word, ἀποκάλυψις, revelation, as in 1 Cor. 1:7, a more definite and more vivid term. Christ, who had remained hidden from the sight of man, whose presence with His Church had been an invisible one, Matt. 28:20, will then manifest himself as Ruler and Judge of the world by appearing as such visibly and publicly. Col. 3:1-4. Another expression for this manifestation of Christ's glory is "the brightness of His coming," 2:8, the epiphany of His parousia, which designates particularly the glory and magnificence after the preceding concealment. Cp. also Titus 2:13.

The revelation of our Lord and Savior Jesus shall take place "from heaven with His mighty angels." These two modal prepositional phrases define the manner of His coming. He comes from heaven, where now He sits on the right hand of the majesty on high, where He rules and intercedes for His own. Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 1:3. On yonder Day he shall descend visibly from heaven to raise the dead, to judge mankind, to conduct His own into everlasting glory, Cp. 1 Thess. 4:14-17.

He will come with His mighty angels, the angels of His power; that vast host of heavenly spirits enhancing the glory of His coming, 1 Thess. 3:13; Matt. 16:27; 25:31; Rev. 19:14; Mark 8:38. They are called angels of His power because through them His divine power is manifested, they carry out His orders, His word of power. As they assisted in the giving of the Law, Heb. 2:2, Gal. 3:19, so they shall assist Christ on the great Day of Resurrection. Cp. Matt. 13:41; 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16.

"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." V. 8. The first prepositional phrase still describes the manner of the revelation of the Lord Jesus. He shall reveal Himself in a flame of fire, a fiery flame. This expression stresses in still greater measure the glory and majesty of Christ's Advent. He comes not in dim, shadowy twilight. He appears in radiant glory of fiery splendor, in a veritable sea of flames. In the Old Testament, fire is the symbol of God's appearance and proximity; particularly God's coming to judgment is pictured as a coming in fire. Gen. 15:17; Ex. 3:2; 13:21, 22; 19:18; Ps. 97:3; Is. 29:6; 30:30; Dan. 7:9, 10. This symbolic language is here applied to Christ's Advent; cp. 1 Cor. 3:13; Heb. 10:27; 12:29. The participial clause immediately following is not to be connected with "flaming fire," but with "our Lord Jesus Christ," v. 7, "taking vengeance," when He takes vengeance. The Greek phrase *διδόναι ἐκδίκησιν*, occurs only here in the New Testament, but it is found in the Septuagint, Ezek. 25:14; cp. Luke 18:7. The vengeance He metes out is a just one, the punishment He inflicts, well deserved. He is a righteous Judge, whose judgments cannot but be righteous, vv. 5, 6.

Christ will take vengeance "on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The repetition of the article before both terms indicates that St. Paul has in mind two classes of such as shall be punished. The two expressions therefore do not simply describe unbelievers in general. The one class consists of such as "know not God," the heathen, whom Paul describes elsewhere by the same term, Cp. 1 Thess. 1:9; 4:5; Gal. 4:8; Eph. 2:12. While the heathen know that there is a god, a creator and preserver of the universe, Rom. 1:19-21, they do not know the one, true, living God. That is not an excusable lack of knowledge; that is a serious fault, damnable guilt. Instead of seeking God, Acts 17:27, they harden their hearts and refuse to obey God, Rom. 1:18, 28.

The second class are such as "obey not the Gospel," etc. That refers to the Jews who knew the true God but obeyed neither this God nor His Gospel. Cp. Rom. 10:3, 16, 21. Their unbelief

constitutes a still greater guilt. Salvation is offered to them, but they reject it and go so far as to persecute them who bring them the Gospel. We see that Paul divides "them that trouble" the Thessalonians, v. 6, into two classes in exact keeping with his statement that Jews and Gentiles actually afflicted the Christians at Thessalonica, 1 Thess. 2:14-16. In a striking manner Paul explicitly states that they obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, although he had named the Lord Jesus only a moment before, v. 7. He does this in order to distinguish between the two classes, the heathen knowing not Jesus, but only a god, and chiefly in order to point out the greater guilt of the Jews. In rejecting the Gospel the Jews reject their own Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One, for whom the Old Testament believers had been so anxiously looking. They reject their Lord Jehovah, who has a right to demand faith and obedience and has threatened His wrath to all that disobey Him. They reject Jesus, their Savior, the only One that can deliver them from sin and from the wrath to come. An enormous, ominous, fatal guilt: to obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. On the latter expression cp. Acts 6:7; Rom. 1:5.

"Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." V. 9. Paul names the penalty which will be meted out to the unbelievers, be they Jews or Gentiles, "everlasting destruction." The pronoun *who*, such as, οἱτινες, *quippe qui*, refers to the two classes named in v. 8 and at the same time indicates the reason for their punishment, being of such a nature as described in v. 8. The Greek expression rendered "shall be punished," δίκην τίσουσιν, occurs only here in the New Testament. Τίτειν means pay, recompense; δίκη denotes a judicial decision, the execution of the sentence, punishment. The penalty they will have to pay is added in the form of an apposition, everlasting destruction. Ὁλεθρος denotes ruin, destruction, death, and is modified by αἰώνιος, eternal, everlasting, enduring throughout the ages. Terrible words, indeed, announcing a horrible fate. Αἰώνιος designates not only a long time, which after all is limited, but unlimited, endless duration. The word occurs in a threefold sense: 1) without beginning and without end; so used of God, Rom. 16:26; Heb. 9:14; 2) without beginning, Rom. 16:25; 3) without end; 2 Cor. 4:18 (note the contrast "temporal"); 2 Pet. 1:11; Heb. 9:15, etc. The latter meaning is the only possible one here. Cp. the parallel Matt. 25:41, 46, where αἰώνιος is used to designate the duration of both life and punishment.

The term "from the presence" has had many conflicting interpretations. Many commentators take ἀπό in the sense of "away from," denoting separation, severance. The wicked are to be

separated from the presence or face of the Lord. In this sense the word is undoubtedly used chap. 2:2; Gal. 5:4; Rom. 9:3. This interpretation is also possible, since eternal destruction consists in separation from God and the beatific vision of His countenance. The context, however, decides against this explanation. It does not at all suit the phrase immediately following, "and from the glory of His power." Moreover, the context emphasizes not the negative side of the destruction, the lack of happiness, but the positive side, destruction, ruin, death. Therefore we prefer the interpretation adopted by Bengel and others who take ἀπό in the sense of away from a starting point, originating, emanating from, designating the effecting cause. The destruction goes forth from the face, from the presence of the Lord. This sense of ἀπό is found Acts 3:20; Rom. 13:1; Gal. 1:1. The expression "from the face of the Lord" denotes in a vivid manner the Lord as the cause of the destruction. His face, the face of the Judge, is turned upon the unbelievers, menacing, terrifying, punishing, prostrating; cp. Ex. 14:24-28. This interpretation agrees well with the final phrase "and from the glory of His power." God works and executes destruction by means of His omnipotent strength and power; and since at the time of the execution of His judgment He appears on earth in His glory, Paul says that the destruction is caused by the glory of His power, thus emphasizing the glorious manifestation of the power of Christ in His judgment upon the unbelievers. This interpretation also agrees well with the following verse which speaks of Christ's judicial appearance and activity on earth.

"When He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe because our testimony among you was believed in that day." V. 10. The first clause states the time when the punishment, v. 9, shall occur, and ἔλθῃ has the force of the Future Perfect, "shall have come." The ὅταν, when, whenever, implies that the exact time of His coming is unknown. But whenever it occurs, this Advent which shall usher in eternal perdition for the wicked and unbelievers shall be the day of His glorification in His saints, the day when in His believing followers He shall be admired. While v. 7 stressed the negative side of salvation, v. 10 emphasizes the positive side. The infinitives are infinitives of purpose. The "saints" are not the angels accompanying Christ, cp. v. 7, but, as usual, the Christians. They are here called by this noble name. It is Christ that shall be glorified on that day, but He shall be glorified in His saints, His believers. By the glorious work of redeeming, justifying, sanctifying, His followers, He Himself is glorified. The glorification and salvation of His believers shall redound to His own glorification; cp. v. 12; John 17:10, 22-26. In like manner He shall be admired in all them that

believe. That heavenly salvation into which He has led the believers will be an object of joyous, marveling admiration; and that is indeed an admiration of Christ, an adoring admiration of Him who is the Author of this great salvation, Heb. 5:9. This admiration is reflected in the joyous rhythm of the two truly beautiful parallel statements. In the glory of yonder world the true character of the holiness of the Christians, which is so often despised and ridiculed by the children of this world, shall be manifested. As in the first member of the two parallels "saints" and "glorification" correspond, so in the second "faith" and "admir-ing vision." What was here the unseen object of our faith will then be seen in us by an astonished, marveling world. The present participle "believing" is better attested than the aorist participle and designates the enduring faith as characteristic of the Christians. Christ will be admired "in all." Every individual believer will participate in this glorification, also those who have already fallen asleep. Cp. 1 Thess. 4:13-17. The parenthetical clause "because our testimony among you was believed," made emphatic by being placed before "on that day," was added by St. Paul in order to stress the fact that the Thessalonians also belong to "them that believe." The apostle seeks to rouse in them the joyous conviction that they also are numbered with those who shall be glorified and beatified after all their tribulations. Cp. v. 7. "Our testimony" is the testimony proclaimed by the apostles, the testimony of Christ, 1 Cor. 1:6; of God, 1 Cor. 2:1, the testimony concerning Christ that God proclaims through the apostle. This "our testimony" is one "among you," ἐφ' ὑμᾶς, has been brought to you. The words form one concept, and therefore the article is not repeated before the prepositional phrase. Cp. 1 Thess. 4:16. The last words of v. 10, "in that day," are to be connected with the two verbs "to be glorified" and "to be admired." All other suggested connections are forced, and Luther's translation, "our testimony concerning that day," is grammatically impossible. The Authorized Version has translated correctly. "That day" is the day of Christ's Second Advent, to which Paul had frequently referred already in his first letter. He adds these words after the parenthesis in order to remind the Christians at Thessalonica that only then would their rest and glorification come. Until that day they were to remain patiently faithful.

It is significant that St. Paul stresses eschatological truths although the congregation was being agitated and excited by many contradictory and false views and opinions on these matters. That a truth is being perverted or abused does not prohibit its correct use and application. The very abuse of this doctrine urged Paul to set the Thessalonians right on this important subject and to

point out the comfort implied in it for the oppressed and afflicted. In the second chapter he adds the needed warnings.

Another question may arise. In order to comfort the believers, St. Paul reminds them of the terrible fate of their persecutors. Does that not imply fostering the spirit of vindictiveness and malice toward one's enemies? Certainly not! Waiting for God's judgment is a matter altogether different from avenging oneself; cp. 1 Pet. 2:23. It was not some insignificant reason that prompted the enemies to trouble the Thessalonian Christians. They hated the servants and children of God because they hated the truth of God. In the minatory or imprecatory psalms we read similar language. Verse 8 in particular proves that salvation had been offered to these persecutors also, but they had not obeyed the Gospel. Therefore nothing but judgment remains.

"Wherefore also we pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power." V. 11. "Wherefore," etc. 8, does not designate the cause, but the purpose, the end and aim of Paul's prayer. "Also" is to be connected with "pray," not with "we." Paul wants to say that he and his fellow workers not only expect and hope for something, but they actually pray for its realization. This prayer is "for you," on behalf, for the benefit and welfare, of the readers, that they might be partakers of the glorification. The prayer is an incessant one, "always." Paul communes unceasingly with God in prayer. In v. 3 he thanks God on behalf of his readers, now he prays for them. Here we obtain a view of the apostle's prayer life. Cp. 1 Thess. 1:2; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3, 4; etc. It is not an exaggeration, it is not hyperbolic language when he uses these and similar expressions. It is exactly what God demands of every pastor and every preacher. Cp. 1 Thess. 5:17; Acts 6:4. To the apostle, prayer was half of his work and the more important half. *Ora et labora*, placing prayer before work is thoroughly Scriptural advice. To omit prayer for one's congregation makes a pastor guilty of sin, 1 Sam. 12:23. Let us pray more frequently and more earnestly for our congregations.

The object of Paul's prayer is stated in the final clause. Paul pleads with God that God would count them worthy of the calling. "Our God," he says, the God in whom we believe and whom we love, to whom we turn in all our concerns, of whom we expect the answer to our prayers. He prays that this God "would count you worthy," judge, regard, you worthy. Cp. 1 Tim. 5:17. The word never means to make worthy. "Of this calling" cannot, then, refer to the divine calling unto faith. That had already occurred when they were brought to faith by the preaching of the Gospel. The apostle has in mind a future calling of which God would judge

them worthy. The term *κλήσις* is used in the passive sense and denotes the blessing unto which one is called, the future heavenly bliss. (In like manner *ἐλπίς* is used both in an active and a passive sense, denoting either the hope within us or the blessing hoped for, as in Col. 1:5.) If we would take the word *call* here in the active sense, we would have to think of the future call, the call unto the final fruition of salvation, that brings to a successful end what the call unto faith has begun in this life. Cp. Matt. 25:34; Rev. 19:9. The apostle furthermore prays that God would "fulfill," bring to perfection, to completion, "all the good pleasure of His goodness." The word *πληρώσει*, fulfill, is not construed with the double Accusative, and therefore an expression like fulfill "in you," or "for you," for whom I pray is to be supplied rather than simply "you." God is asked to fulfill in the Thessalonians "all the good pleasure of goodness." We must not refer this to God's good pleasure, as many interpreters do, interpreting the phrase of God's plan of redemption and salvation. That interpretation would conflict with the second object of "fulfill," which without doubt refers to the Thessalonians, their "work of faith." It conflicts also with the Pauline usage of "goodness," *ἀγαθωσύνη*, which in the three other passages refers to the goodness, the uprightness of the heart and life of the Christian, Rom. 15:14; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9. To justify the reference to the divine counsel of redemption, of which, indeed, *εὐδοκία*, "good pleasure," is frequently used, one would expect the definite article. Cp. Eph. 1:5, 9. The clause refers to the Thessalonians and expresses Paul's desire that God might perfect in them every pleasure in everything that is ethically good, in other words, every inclination, every desire, to be good and upright in the sight of God. This God must do, for by nature we are all inclined toward evil. This goodness, this desire for goodness is a fruit of the Spirit, and God who has begun it must bring it to perfection. That will be accomplished fully and completely upon arriving at our final goal which Paul has in view in this entire context.

And finally God is asked to fulfill "the work of faith." This expression occurs already 1 Thess. 1:3. It designates not the work that faith does. The Genitive is expegetical, the work that consists in faith. Faith is called a work, e. g., John 6:29. This is the work of God, the work that God wants you to do or work, v. 28. Correctly understood, faith is indeed a work, a deed; not in so far as it produces good works and brings forth fruit. No, faith is a tearing away from trusting in oneself and a casting oneself upon the living God, Rom. 4:20, 21. This faith of the Thessalonians which had stood the test of persecution God is asked to fulfill, to bring to perfection, for God alone is the Author and Finisher of

faith. This God is to do "with power." This phrase is to be connected with the verb "fulfill" and is placed at the end for the sake of emphasis, Rom. 1:4; Col. 1:29.

"That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." V. 12. Here the final goal is named, the glory of God and Christ. That is the ultimate purpose of all things, hence also of the perfecting of the Thessalonians in faith and their being judged worthy of salvation. The name of our Lord Jesus is to be glorified. He is the Lord and Savior; hence His name is a name above every name, Phil. 2:9. This is actually saying that He Himself shall be glorified. Cp. v. 10, where the glorification is predicted of Jesus directly. Verse 10 shows that Jesus' name is Jesus Himself. The word *name* points to His self-revelation as Lord and Savior and emphasizes that He wants to be known and worshiped just as He has revealed Himself and that He actually is what He is called. His name is to be glorified "in you." Through the glorification and salvation of His believing followers He Himself is glorified, v. 10. "And ye in Him." The prepositional phrase "in Him" may be connected with "Jesus," or with "the name." The latter may be the preferable interpretation since "the name" is the chief concept and it is the Name which is being glorified, but both connections express the same truth. The Christians are to be glorified in Jesus, or in Jesus' name; they shall be partakers of His glory, of the glory of His name. The reciprocal relation as expressed in the words "the name of Jesus Christ in you and you in Him" is an exhaustive representation, as Luenemann puts it, and emphasizes the closest possible communion and fellowship. Gal. 6:14; 1 Cor. 6:13.

"According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." St. Paul humbles all pride of man. The glorification of the name of Jesus in us and our glorification in His name we owe not to ourselves; that is due solely and only to grace. This effectually prevents any misunderstanding of the being "counted worthy," v. 11. The translation of the Authorized Version, "of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ," is not correct. The one article before the two nouns "God and Lord" signifies that both epithets are applied to the same person. Jesus Christ is our God and Lord. Thus the chapter closes with a very clear and positive testimony to the Deity of Jesus. Cp. 2 Pet. 1:1, 11; Titus 2:13.

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