

Introduction

It is essential to understand the connection of these two verses with their previous context. In Paul, the word used for "wherefore" is always pointing back to some thing as a purpose or goal. For example, consider Col 1:28-29. Paul desires to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus—that is why he preaches, teaches, and warns everyone he comes into contact with. Verse 29 says "whereunto" I also labor...In other words, Paul works hard with the purpose that he just stated—to present every man perfect.

What is the previous purpose or goal in our text? In other words, why does Paul pray this way? It is the glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ in the future—at his second coming after the tribulation. Oh, how much Paul desires to bring glory to his Saviour. At verse 10, Paul is talking about *then*. Paul switches gears and says, I want to talk to you about *now*.

The connection between verse 10 and 11 is that the future glorification of our Lord Jesus Christ carries with it present responsibilities. Consider these verses in this light, namely that *God wants our walk and our work to bring glory to Christ now, as well as then*.

Author's Translation and Structural Diagram

11. To this end
we also **pray**
always
for you,
[1] that [Content of the Prayer]
[A] our God **would count** you **worthy**
of this calling,
[B] and powerfully **fulfill** every good pleasure of goodness
and work of faith
12. [2] that [Purpose of the Prayer]
[A] the name
of our Lord Jesus Christ
would be glorified
in you
[B] and you
in him,
- [3] according to [Basis of the Expected Answer to the Prayer]
the grace of our God
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Content of the Prayer – v. 11

Paul makes two main prayer requests, as indicated by the two bold print verbs in the last portion of the verse.

A. An Evaluation

The verb "to count worthy" is used in Luke 7:7, Acts 15:38, 1 Tim 5:17, Heb 3:3, Heb 10:29, Acts 5:41, 2 Thess 1:5. This indicates an evaluation, made by God, of the believers in Thessalonica. This is a personal grading, if you will. We need to understand what is the basis of the evaluation.

The realm of the evaluation is "this calling." The "calling" mentioned is a "well known" calling, namely the calling of salvation. This is mentioned in 2 Thess 2:14 in relation to the gospel. This calling has two sides to it: privilege and responsibility.

- (i) Privilege – Heb 3:1, Rom 11:29, Php 3:14, Eph 1:18, 4:4

- (ii) Responsibility – Php 3:14, Eph 4:1, 2 Thess 1:11, 1 Thess 2:12, 2 Peter 1:10
Not only does the calling refer to the gospel in a general way, but even more specifically to the believer's participation with Christ at his second coming.

So what about this evaluation? Is it future or present? I take it to be present because of the following text. We know that the basis of salvation is not something we do, but something Christ does. Paul means here to exhort the believers to "work out their salvation." That is, he wants them to demonstrate their salvation in very clear terms, and thus receive a favorable evaluation of the Lord.

You might say it like this: May the Lord evaluate you and find you acting in a manner worthy of his name and his purposes in calling you. 1 Thess 2:12.

B. A Fulfillment

The prayer is that God would powerfully fulfill two things in the Thessalonians:

- i. Every good pleasure of goodness
ii. Every work of faith.

Why do I take the text this way, instead of as the KJV, which inserts "good pleasure of his goodness"? One reason is that the italicized "his" is not present in the Greek text. Another is that these are a parallel construction—work of faith means work that comes forth from faith (remember—faith works, James says).

The parallel seems to be desires that come from God's goodness implanted in the believer. This means every "good desire" or "wish" that the Thessalonians have. Paul had such desires—Rom 10:1, for example. The point is that God's work of regeneration does and ought to put good desires in your soul. Is that demonstrable in your case, brother and sister?

Where do such desires and works come from? Php 2:13 tells us, in terms very similar to those of this verse: "For it is God who works in you both to will [desire] and to do [work] of his good pleasure." Php 1:6 says "He who has begun a good work in you."

But what does fulfill mean? There are two similar possibilities:

1) Fulfill may mean to "bring to pass." In other words, any good work you want to do, Paul prays God would allow that work to be completed. What Paul would be saying (Php) is that God has implanted good desires and energy in you—now (2 Thess) he prays that those things will be worked out and those works will be fulfilled!

2) Fulfill may mean to "bring to full measure." In other words, Paul is praying that God has put these things in you, and Paul now prays that God would bring good desires and works to their full measure in you. In other words, that God would bring that to completion in you.

In either case, how exciting! Pay attention to Paul's prayer...and believe that because Paul wrote this, God truly does desire to work in you this way.

Note that Paul doesn't pray for every kind of desire or work to be powerfully fulfilled. Only those that are of faith and are truly good!

2. Purpose of the Prayer – v. 12a**A. The Glorification of the Lord**

Here is the *doxological* focus. The "doxology" that we sing is "Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him above ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen." It is meant to bring praise and honor and glory to God.

Our conviction as dispensational Bible believers is that all things are to end up at one destination—God's glory. That's a well-founded conviction: after all, Paul held it: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom 11:36). See also Rev 4:11.

The “name” of the Lord Jesus Christ represents HIMSELF. Not just his name, but is reputation, his entire person. Of course, you don’t want to mar the family name. Paul wants us to stay far away from causing reproach to come to the name of Christ (1 Tim 6:1, 2 Peter 2:2).

B. The Glorification of the Believer

Suppose that you are involved in a small company that invents a highly successful new cancer drug. The work done will bring a large measure of prestige to the name of that company. But since you are “in” the company, when people find that out, they will raise their eyebrow and take notice.

So it is with our Saviour. When he is glorified, we will be too—since we are “in” him. When the “head” of our company gets the glory, we share in that. Oh praise His name!

3. Basis of the Expected Answer to the Prayer – v. 12b

There is only one way this all could happen – the grace of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. We really cast ourselves at the feet of God and rely on His grace to bring about those things for which we pray. There is no other way. Of course, we could have a whole sermon on the grace of God.

Conclusions

God wants our walk and our work to bring glory to Christ now, as well as in the future – now and then. Not occasionally, but all the time.

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