



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, October 30-November 5 (C) – 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12

Focus: *Give Thanks for Others*

word of life

“We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of everyone of you for one another is increasing.”

(2 Thessalonians 1:3 NRSV)

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12

It is sometimes difficult to imagine the early church trying to move on without the physical presence of Jesus Christ with them to be their guide. They were doing something new as they claimed aspects of their Jewish heritage but also reached out to those who were not Jewish. All this was done under the fire of persecution.

Second Thessalonians is a brief letter composed of three chapters written to believers who lived with the reality of persecution. We might expect a thread of discontent settling into the early church in Thessalonica. It would not be surprising to read how the tension of these circumstances might be too much for the Thessalonians to endure.

1. *What would that be like to be persecuted because you believe in Jesus?*
2. *How might being persecuted strengthen or weaken faith?*

Thus, the letter begins with words of thanks—not just a passing thought of thanks. Instead the writer indicates an unending prayer of thanksgiving to God for the steadfastness of faith manifested in the church in Thessalonica. The church is not alone, but is remembered in prayer and with gratitude.

Despite the persecution the faith of the Thessalonians was growing and growing abundantly. Not only that, the love for one another was also increasing. Surprising as it might be, growth in faith and love are not automatic characteristics of the church in any age, especially a Christian community living through persecution and difficult times.

3. *How can you explain the growth of faith during a time of persecution?*
4. *How might a growth in faith correlate with a growth in love for the Christian community?*

There are continuous prayers of thanksgiving to God for the church in Thessalonica, but these prayers overflow to words of praise to others. The writer boldly boasts of this congregation and the ways it keeps the faith despite the persecutions and afflictions. Their struggles do not go by unnoticed. They are not alone. The body of Christ is supporting them on their difficult journey.

5. *What might it have meant to the Thessalonians to hear that people were boasting about their steadfastness and faith?*
6. *Compare and contrast boasting about ourselves and boasting about others.*

“To this end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfill by his power every good resolve and work of faith.” (2 Thessalonians 1:11 NRSV) We do not endure suffering, tribulation, and persecution in order to be worthy, but we know that Jesus Christ was also persecuted. Thus, it is a wise mentor to pray for courage and wisdom for the believers in Thessalonica, so that they might be made worthy of God’s call. For it is by the grace of God, we live each day, ready to face whatever the day might bring.

7. *What is your favorite part of the prayer for the Thessalonians?*

Word among us

Shelia had never attended a Friday night Shabbat service at the local synagogue. So when her church decided to visit, Shelia was the first to sign up for the opportunity. That night as she sat in the hushed sanctuary of the synagogue, she was moved by the music. But she was most surprised at the joy in the service. She tried to articulate and understand the joy that she experienced.

1. *Have you ever attended a Shabbat service at a synagogue? Describe it.*
2. *What elements of joy do you associate with Jewish believers?*

As Shelia reflected on her experience, she realized her own perception of the Jews rested primarily with the persecution of the Holocaust. She assumed all Jews would still be devastated by the persecution of the past. In worshipping that night at the synagogue, she realized how mistaken she had been.

Her experience set up more reflections about her own congregation. She wondered how visitors would perceive her church as they worshipped. Would they observe joy and love? Would they experience grace? The following Sunday, she invited a friend to worship. Afterwards, they had a lengthy conversation about her friend's visit to her church.

3. *What might a visitor experience at your church during worship?*
4. *What do you hope a visitor discovers at your church?*

The church in Thessalonica was described as one with a faith growing abundantly as well as love expanding towards one another. Those are wonderful and rich characteristics for any congregation — the kind of things which helps a church to grow.

5. *Take a minute to ponder which came first – the faith or the love. How are those characteristics interrelated and integral to a growing congregation?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people

During difficult times, it is encouraging to hear from someone who has been praying for us. Prayer can buoy us up as we pass through persecution, suffering, and difficulty. It is such a blessing to know we are held in prayer by others in the Christian community—both near and far.

6. *What does it mean for you to know people are praying for you?*
7. *Describe a time when you knew people were praying for you.*

In baptism, we are brought into a Christian family – those who remind us of our true identity as children of God. We are not alone, but others are with us. We also can support others on their journey. It is a privilege to pray for others as they go through the joys and sorrows of life.

Prayer

Maker of all, we give thanks for the faith of all believers, especially those who are going through difficulty. Amen

last word

Throughout the day,
pray for those going through difficulty.

Daily Faith Practices

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