



Welcome to Grace Communion International

November 1, 2020

CALL TO WORSHIP



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“17 And he (Jesus) is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

19 For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”

Colossians 1:17-20 ESV



As we come to worship this morning, we acknowledge that Jesus is the head of the church. He is the Elect One sent forth by the Father who came down from heaven, humbled himself, died on the cross for us and was resurrected to save us from sin and death,

SERMON

**Called Into God's Kingdom and
Glory**



SCRIPTURE READING

1 Thessalonians 2:9-13 (ESV)



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1Thessalonians 2:9-13 ESV



“9 For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.”



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1Thessalonians 2:9-13 ESV



“11 For you know how, like a father with his children,

12 we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.”

1Thessalonians 2:9-13 ESV



- “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.”

**WHAT WE HAVE JUST READ ARE THE INSPIRED
WORD OF GOD**

**THANK YOU GOD FOR YOUR HIGH CALLING INTO
YOUR OWN KINGDOM AND GLORY.**

AMEN



During last week's sermon from 1 Thessalonians, entitled "Living to Please God", we pause to think about how we could emulate, imitate the example of the apostle Paul as he imitated Christ.

We saw how the apostle Paul was faithful, authentic and fearless in his proclamation of the gospel and how he love the brethren giving his own life to them as he served Jesus.

During today's sermon, we are going to think more specifically about the versus 11 to 13. The apostle Paul exhorted, urged, encouraged and charged or implored with everyone in this young Thessalonian congregation to live a life worthy of the Lord because of their very high calling into his kingdom and glory.

What does it mean to us to live a life worthy of the Lord?

...to walk in manner worthy of the Lord who calls you into his own kingdom (vs. 12)



As we think about what we have just read, let us remember that Jesus has reconciled us to God. When Stephen was being stoned and as those who were stoning him were filled with anger and grinded their teeth against him, Stephen full of the Holy Spirit gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at his right hand. And he said, **"Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God"** (from acts 7:55-56).

This is a clear indication that Jesus retained his humanity when he ascended to heaven in glory after his crucifixion and resurrection. This is why he is called the Firstborn. Being the Firstborn, and being God, he represents all of humanity.

God has called us into his kingdom and glory as we become united to Jesus in faith.

We cannot walk in a manner worthy of God without receiving the gift righteousness and sanctification from God. He is the one who makes us holy and righteous.

The encouragement and exhortation of Paul was for all the church and each member individually.

As we look to Jesus, he lived perfectly by the two great commandments. Living in our incarnate flesh, he loved God with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his mind. This is the great commandment. He lived perfectly for us.

His first allegiance was to God the Father. With this complete love towards God, he loved neighbour as himself.

If you remember what we read in 1 John, the definition of God's love is to walk in his commandments. **“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.” [1 Jo 5:3 ESV]**

We love others by first walking in the will of God.

Our instructions are not from other people who might tell us how to love them. Our instructions and directions come from God and being united in him. If we take our direction first from other people, then other people become idols.

We have a powerful example in the Old Testament in the life of Daniel and his friends how God was first in their life.

“6 Among these were Daniel (God is my Judge), Hananiah (God has favoured), Mishael (who is what God is), and Azariah (Jehovah has helped), of the tribe of Judah.

7 And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar (lord of the straitened’s treasure), Hananiah he called Shadrach (royal or the great scribe), Mishael he called Meshach (guest of a king) , and Azariah he called Abednego (servant of Nebo - deity of wisdom and writing).” (Da 1:6-7 ESV)



Daniel and his three friends knew that they belonged to the only and true God. They had been taken captive by the Babylonians. They were very smart and capable young men. They were chosen to go to the King’s University of the time and learn the Babylonian customs. They would attend for three years at the best school of higher learning of the time. The intent of the king was to indoctrinate them in the ways of the Babylonians and in their worship of their many gods. The intent was to educate them out of their belief in the God of the Hebrews.

To assimilate them in the culture, the chief of the eunuchs changed their names.

We can imagine the challenges that these four young men faced. Yet they never forgot their identity and to whom they belonged. Their faith was completely in the one true God.

They were not taken out of society. They lived in the Babylonian society but never became Babylonians in heart.

They obviously did not compromise their worship of God as proved by their willingness to go in the fiery furnace rather than obey men. This is what they said to

the king of Babylon as they refused to bow down and worship his statue.

“16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”” (Da 3:16-18 ESV)

We know what happened. God did miraculously deliver them. Whether God would deliver them or not was not an issue for them. They trusted God both in their life and in their death.

God was first in their life. Their relationship with God regulated how they interacted with others.

We have the same example in the churches of the Thessalonians and the early churches in the first century. They faced persecution. They were ostracized. Some were killed. Others were put in prison. We just need to read Hebrews 11 to see what many of them faced.

The faithful disciples of Jesus in the early church were willing to go through anything rather than deny Jesus.

In our modern time, we have to ask ourselves, “where is our first allegiance?” It is obvious that we have been rescued by God and freed from the shackles of sin to serve the living God.

Being led by the Holy Spirit, we will not fear what man can do to us. Our reverence and awe will be anchored in God first. **We will love others in God's will and not in their will.**

As **Proverbs 1:7** tells us, **“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; fools despise wisdom and instruction”.**

The first Christians did not have access to the New Testament as we have today. They had access to the Old Testament.

What Proverbs 4 tells us still applies to us today. (next slide)

“5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

7 ¶ Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.

8 It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.”

Proverbs 3:5-8 ESV



The following is the reason why we walk in a manner worthy of God.

...who calls us into his own kingdom and glory (v. 12).



We live in this new way of life, in the presence of the kingdom of God now because we do not live in Babylon which in Revelation is identified with the system of this world, but we live in the kingdom of God awaiting its fullness and hope!

What an awesome blessing this is!

“And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.”

(1 Thessalonians 2:13 ESV)



Isn't this a beautiful verse! The apostle Paul and his companions were thanking God continuously because the first Christians heard the words of God and they realized that these were not the words of men but the words of God inspired through men by the Holy Spirit.

We have much to learn from the Thessalonians, don't we?

When we read the Bible and know that it is the progressive proclamation of the good news of Jesus, it makes all the difference in the world.

We can then take the word of God seriously. God, Jesus, is the word come down from heaven. He communicates with us through the written word and by the revelation of the Holy Spirit testifying to Jesus who brings us to God's throne.

When we accept the word of God that Jesus on the cross took away our sins and that in him, we are forgiven, what a difference it makes. Because God is graceful to us and has forgiven us at the cross, we can extend that grace and forgiveness to others first in the church and then to the world as we bear witness to the love of God for all of us in the church and to those who do not yet know God.

What a difference it makes when we know we are beloved of the Lord and accepted by him. We are so precious in God's sight, that His intent is that we live eternally with him in a completely renewed world.

Knowing that this is the word of God, we accept that we will not change the world. Only God can do this. However, we can be and are a blessing as we live in his presence evil world, in this present Babylon as the book of Revelation describes it. Yet, we are aware that we are not part of Babylon but that we live in the kingdom of God awaiting the new Jerusalem. We live in the world, being his ambassadors, yet we know that we do not belong to this present world's kingdom.

What a difference it makes when we live in faith that this true. As the apostle Paul says we are the living letters of God which can be read by anyone.



Disciples of Jesus are living letters to be read by everyone!

“1 ¶ Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you?”

2 You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all.

3 And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.” (2Co 3:1-3 ESV)



Are we conscious of who we are?

We are living letters, witnesses of God to others as the word of God is working in us believers, just as the word was working in the first century Thessalonians believers.

If the word of God was not working in us, we could not be living epistles. It is God who makes us letters from Christ. It is not a letter written with ink but by God the Holy Spirit writing on our human hearts.

We are called to participate in God’s presence and actions in our life.

Let us meditate on these words and how blessed we are to be disciples and weaknesses of Jesus to a world that is dying. This is not God’s final answer. God the Father so loves the world that he gave us His Son not to condemn the world to save all those who believe in the name of Jesus. They will not be condemned. **“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (Joh 3:17 ESV).**

Jesus is the center of the center. **Whoever abides in the teaching of Jesus,**

has both the Father and the Son (2 John 9)

Let us remember and value our high calling. We have been called into God's kingdom and glory through his Son Jesus by the Holy Spirit. It is Jesus our High Priest who brings us to the Father's throne.

Let us praise and worship Him in joy and adoration.