

A Practical Study of 2 Thessalonians

Delighting The Heart of God “Learning to Bring Pleasure to God”

Study Number One – By Growing in Faith and Love – 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says:

Matthew 6:32, 33

For after all these things does the Gentile seek. Your heavenly Father knows you have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all of these things shall be added unto you.

Now, in this series of studies we've translated it from the original text, charted it and studied it for long periods of time. The major verse that stood out is:

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all!

How much of a concern is it that our life and witness be delighting the heart of God?

We say we're a Christian. We say we're going to heaven. Well is that going to be a comfortable experience because we can say: "I am delighting the heart of God."

How high on our priority list is pleasing God? How much do we long for that? How much are we actually experiencing the performance of that right now in our life and walk with God?

We might say "Well I don't know! Because I don't know enough!"

Here are some things that DON'T delight the heart of God. We can talk about that.

James 4:4

You adulteresses, don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God. Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

1 John 2:15, 16

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For everything that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world.

He doesn't like that.

Now, let's turn it around and make it POSITIVE.

Since He doesn't like us building our castles of greed, and living for the here and now, and trying to drive in stakes and roots to stay here forever and to try to find every comfort imaginable, and to live to the nth degree, the high life, then what is it that really delights Him? What is it that makes Him happy? We need a little definition before we dig into the text.

Micah 6:8

He has shown thee, O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you
But to act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.

Well there is a little bit of a definition of what He asks of us.

In Isaiah we read:

Isaiah 62:4

No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you shall be called Hephzibah, you are my delight.

Zephaniah 3:17

The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.

When we woke up this morning, did we sense the Father was singing in joy over us? And our priorities and the way we're living the life? In our care and concern about our walk with Him that we made Him sing this morning?

Now is there anybody else in the Bible that has done that?

How about David? He's "a man after God's own heart" the text tells us.

He was an object of God's true affection.

1 Samuel 13:14

Now your kingdom will not endure [as Samuel's talking to Saul]; the Lord has sought out a man after His own heart and appointed Him leader of His people...

Genesis 5:24

Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

Was Enoch delighting the heart of God?

We picture Enoch, they're walking along having such a great discussion, they got so far and it got so late God says "Why don't you come to My house?" And Enoch "was no more."

There was such a richness of relationship there.

Now preceding the sin in the garden, we have the same thing

God met with them in the cool of the day. It was a RICH experience.

God created man for relationship. He was lonely. He wanted someone to love and to have relationship with.

And then Deuteronomy 34:10, after Moses dies, we read this little obituary:

Deuteronomy 34:10

Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, who knew the Lord face to face.

Now is it possible to delight God? And for Him to be joyful over us?

Well the Psalmist has slipped a cog if Psalm 37:4 says so. What does it say?

Psalm 37:4

Delight yourself in the Lord [and WHAT?]
He'll give you the desires of your heart.

Now so many times we hear Christians praying "God give me

this and give me that. You've promised to give me the desires of my heart." But they forget the first part of that verse.

The condition in the verse is "Delight yourselves in the Lord."

Now how do we do that? In the same way a wife delights herself in her husband. And the same way a husband delights himself in his wife.

It's "you are so important to me, and I love you so much." And to God we're delighting ourselves in Him and then the desires are what He delights to grant.

Listen to these verses:

Jeremiah 9:23, 24

This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise man boast about his wisdom. Let not the strong man boast about his strength. And let not the rich man boast about his riches. But let him who boasts, boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, [now get this] who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness, for in these I delight."

There it is.

What delights His heart?

"kindness,"

“justice,”

“righteousness.”

Now we’re beginning to get a little bit of definition on what it is that delights the heart of God.

Now, some might be saying “I don’t believe that God’s sitting up there looking down and saying: ‘Wow! Look at him! I love him! And look at the way he’s walking with Me! Why look at her! Every time I turn around she’s blessing My socks off by the way she’s living!’”

Job 1:8

Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”

God says “Check on Job.”

What is it that delights God about Job? He’s “blameless and upright” and he’s “a man who fears God” and he turns away or “shuns evil.”

God says “I love him!”

Now there’s one other passage of scripture we take a look at before we break into our four verses.

In Luke chapter 10, verses 38-42 we have that very, very familiar little passage of scripture that's tucked away there that makes everybody laugh.

Jesus, whenever He needed a place to rest, always went to Bethany. It was a two mile walk from Jerusalem and the temple there. And there were three special people there that he always went to see: Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

Now Mary and Martha are two women that are so different, we can hardly believe they came from the same womb.

Mary is very reflective, laid back to say the least. Martha is an intense, active perfectionist. Everything has got to be in its place.

When Jesus would come and ring the doorbell, Martha hit the swinging doors to the kitchen. She'd have a microwave going, she'd be setting the table, she'd be getting dessert ready, she'd get everything hustled up. But she had a problem in that she had a sister that wasn't carrying her share of the load. And the longer Mary delayed in coming to help, the higher the temperature rose as far as Martha was concerned. And remember she bursts in on them and she said:

“Don't you care that I'm out here working my fingers to the bone and she is sitting there doing nothing?”

Now what does Jesus say?”

“Down girl.”

Luke 10:41-42

You’re troubled by a lot of things...Mary has chosen that good part, it shall not be taken away from her.”

What does that tell us? Jesus loves for us to be still and to listen. To spend quality time of reflection and meditation in His presence.

The BIG QUESTION is:

If that’s the kind of person who delights the heart of God, are you that kind of person?

How can we summarize what it takes to delight the heart of God?

These are the SEVEN CHARACTERISTICS of a person who’s delighting the heart of God. It’d be good to face this on a daily basis.

1. He is a person of WORSHIP.

Revelation 4:11

Worthy are Thou, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power...

God delights in our worship, for us to fall on our faces before Him in gratitude and praise for what He has done. He loves to have our worship.

2. He delights in our OBEDIENCE.

Joshua 1:8

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Samuel said in:

1 Samuel 15:22

...To obey is better than sacrifice...

Focus on obedience.

3. COMMUNION.

We're talking about PRAYER and it's not so much petition as it is prayer and praise.

“Hitherto if you asked nothing in My name; ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be made full.” (John 16:24)

4. SUBMISSION.

It is a willingness to do things God's way: SUBMISSION.

Now how do we know whether or not we're submitting?

Psalm 139:23, 24

Search me, O God, and know my heart...

Psalm 26:2, 3

Test me, O Lord, and try me,
examine my heart and my mind...

God has a way of revealing to us those things where we're not submitting to Him. And He is open and available to make those known as we throw our heart open to Him.

5. The unconditional COMMITMENT to His will.

We mean by this that we'll do anything, go anywhere, pay any price, to be available to do His will.

Romans 12:1, 2

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that

which is good and acceptable and perfect.

It is the unconditional commitment to His will.

6. The SURRENDER to His lordship.

Surrender to His lordship.

“Lord, You’re Lord of my life. You’re Lord of my lips. You’re Lord of those things which I have. I give them to You.”

I surrender to His lordship.

7. SACRIFICIAL SERVANTHOOD.

These people are serving others sacrificially in the giving of themselves.

Philippians 2:17

But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.

Paul said in Philippians 1:20 that “if Christ is glorified in body, whether by life or by death,” that’s what he wants. Christ indeed to be magnified.

Now what’s the opposite of that?

1 John 2:28

My little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, you may have confidence and not shrink away in shame from Him at His coming.

If it's awkward, if it's difficult when we get there, we have no one to blame but ourselves, for we have known what it is to delight the heart of God but we have chosen to do other things. And therefore when we meet Him, it is going to be shrinking away in shame in the presence of someone who loves us unconditionally but we didn't care enough to discover what delighted His heart and therefore to do it.

If we are in a relationship with the Lord, we want to delight His heart.

Now let's say that there is some person living on the earth that can be our savior. What's the first thing we'd want to do? We would want to call that person and make contact with them and we would want to be sure that we understand fully what is involved in our salvation, wouldn't we?

And let's say that this great leader also left behind a book of memoirs, would we want to get ahold of it and read it? We sure would and we'd be consumed with what it is that pleases him and delights his heart.

This whole series is called **DELIGHTING THE HEART OF GOD**.

We're going to give EIGHT ways that we can do it in these verses.

Now, just a tiny bit of background to the book before we break into the text.

We have to build the framework for our passage of scripture. We have to have a little introduction and then we have to know where the book came from and where it's going and how it all turned out because we're going to come back to some of that stuff when we get a little further on.

In Acts chapter 16 Paul had a vision from the man of Macedonia saying "come over and help us" and he was in Troas. So he and Dr. Luke and Timothy and Silas got on the boat and they sailed 90 miles north to Neapolis. They got out of the boat and walked 8 miles to Philippi.

It was through the experience with Lydia the little slave girl and the jailer that that church was formed.

Now, because of the beating they took, because of casting the unclean spirit out of that little girl, they were driven out of Philippi. So what'd they do? They packed their tent and went back to Antioch. No they didn't. They went 50 miles down the road to Thessalonica. They began to teach in the synagogue in Thessalonica.

Now they had a good ministry. People started to come to know

the Lord. But the Jews stirred up so much strife that they literally dragged some of these Christians down to the theatre and nearly took their lives. And it drove Paul and Silas and Timothy out of town. They were there for three weeks only. That's the extent of their ministry in Thessalonica—three weeks.

Now when they get to Berea, which is another 50 miles down the road, the Bible says:

Acts 17:11

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scripture daily, whether those things were so.

They found some eager readers in Berea.

Now, the same guys that stirred up the trouble in Thessalonica went down to Berea and stirred up the trouble there. Now Paul had to make a choice. Was he going to leave town completely and not satisfy these Bereans or was he going to go by himself and leave some of his staff behind? He chose the latter.

He left behind Silas and Timothy to teach in Berea and he went 250 miles on south to Athens by himself.

Now to show how hard ministry is, when he got to Athens, that's the only place he struck out. He was unsuccessful in

establishing a church in Athens.

Why he went 40 miles on over to Corinth, we don't know, but when he got to Corinth that too was a very difficult ministry. It was there that Silas and Timothy joined him.

He's been through it in Philippi, been through it in Thessalonica, been through it in Berea. He got down to Athens, he struck out and got over to Corinth and created all kind of havoc there and he needed some encouragement.

When Silas and Timothy got there, he said "Guess what? Some of the Christians in Thessalonica are really hurting and they want to hear from you." That made Paul's day.

He wrote 1 Thessalonians.

In 1 Thessalonians 3:10 he writes that letter "to supply what is lacking in their faith."

If we only had three weeks to teach, imagine how much we would be able to get across. Not nearly as much as Paul could do, because he would preach until midnight. When a guy falls out of the window he'd go and raise him from the dead and then preach until morning.

But then something happened. Some guy in Thessalonica said that Paul wrote a letter to say that he was mistaken and that the Day of the Lord had come. And now these dear Christians are going through great persecution and now here's a letter

supposedly from Paul saying the Day of the Lord is here and they're all mad and scared because they missed the rapture and Paul was wrong.

Now Paul has to write another letter. And so he writes 2 Thessalonians, some 6 or 8 months later.

Some of the things are very similar in the letter. We're pursuing the outline of "Delighting the Heart of God" and there'll be EIGHT of these.

Are we delighting the heart of God?

Study #1: Are we delighting the heart of God by GROWING in FAITH and LOVE?

Our KEY VERSE is verse 3.

Now that's so we can move through this quickly in this first part because we have the greetings.

It was Socrates who said:

An unexamined life is not worth living.
(source unknown)

This is going to be a time to examine our own life and our own heart in view of what's said in these verses.

v. 1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

“Paul and Silas and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:”

These first two verses, just like every other epistle, form the GREETING—the SALUTATION to the letter.

There are THREE MEN mentioned:

1. Paul,
2. Silvanus (or Silas), and
3. Timothy.

We're writing to the Thessalonians:

“...in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Verse 2 is the GREETING.

v. 2 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“GRACE” always POINTS TO GOD and what He does for us.

“PEACE” points to man and what results because we receive what God has provided in grace.

We’re on the right track if we have peace in our heart because we have allowed Jesus Christ to come into our heart and to become our Savior.

So many people say:

they’re WAITING for it,

they’re WORKING for it,

they’re WORRYING about it.

It’s just like they think they have forever and they keep putting it off.

Sometimes it’s just, we’re going to have to shock the socks off of somebody who’s trying and who goes to church and has been baptized and catechized and simonized and homogenized and done everything under the sun BUT inviting Christ into their lives.

It’s like they blow fog and blow smoke around and talk about this and about that and the money they’ve given and the places they’ve served and the things they’ve done and the church’s they’ve joined. Wonderful! Great! God’s not

impressed. We don't delight the heart of God by what we DO but what we ARE!

We are His child by faith, through the blood of Christ!

Ephesians 2:8, 9

By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.

Want to make heaven happy? If we're not a Christian we can do that. Listen to this.

Luke 13:3

I tell you, no, but, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

Luke 15:7

I tell you this in the same way, there'll be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine just persons who don't need any.

We can make them sing up there by our faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Now we come to our KEY VERSE.

v. 3 We ought always to be giving thanks to God for you, brethren, even as it is fitting, because your faith is growing wonderfully, and the love of each one of you all toward one another is growing ever greater;

“We ought always to be giving thanks to God for you, brethren, even as it is fitting, because your faith is growing wonderfully, and the love of each one of you all toward one another is growing even greater;”

“We ought to always to be giving thanks to God for you, brethren...”

Do they love that?

That is positive, isn't it? That is a great word of encouragement.

Anybody ever come and say “I just thank God every day for you.”

Hebrews 10:24

and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good works.

How do we do that? We just put our arm around somebody and say, “Boy I couldn't have made it without you!” Oh man that means so much!

Joe White wrote a book called *Orphans at Home*. He writes about when it's time to tell our children we love them. He comes up with 50 statements we ought to say to our kids. And why is it that we can't say these kinds of statements to our kids or to our friends before they die? Listen to Joe White—50 phrases we can use with our kids that will win. These aren't all of them.

(When So Many Feel Like Orphans at Home: It's Time to Fall in Love With Your Kids Again by Joe White)

1. You're so much fun to be around!
3. Hang on a second while I call *Sports Illustrated*—they'll want a picture of this!
5. I look up to you!
7. You are so *thoughtful*!
10. You're such a joy to us!
13. You handled that beautifully!
14. That's incredible!
16. They just didn't make kids as good as you when I was growing up!
18. Keep that up and you'll be the world champion someday!
21. The guy who marries you is going to be so lucky!
22. That's worth a trophy ten feet high!
23. Your mom and I are so grateful to be your parents!
24. I need to get word to the White House about this—the President will want know about it!
26. That's fabulous!
30. God is truly a miracle worker—to produce a kid as great as you from ordinary parents like us!

- 32. You'll always be in my hall of fame!
 - 33. I am *impressed*!
 - 35. You're the best!
 - 48. Fantastic!
 - 49. You make me so happy!
 - 50. I love you!
- pp. 175-78

It's just positive words of affirmation that make a kid's day. Why can't we do that for one another?

Paul said, "I'll tell you one thing, every time I wake up I ought to be thanking God for you Thessalonians. You made my day in Corinth! Man I'd have been splattered all over the sidewalk in several difficult situations and you came along and you made my day!"

And I want you to know:

"I ought to always be giving thanks to God for you, brother, even as it is fitting..."

WHY?

TWO REASONS—they're delighting the heart of God:

1. "because your faith is growing wonderfully"—that's number one, and
2. "the love of each one of you all"—he's southerner—"toward one another is growing even greater;"

Now let's talk for just a second about those two things so we can ask ourselves whether we're delighting the heart of God with these two things.

1. Are we delighting the heart of God by a "faith that is growing wonderfully"?

That word means to GROW EXCEEDINGLY—to INCREASE ABUNDANTLY.

The picture is of a well fertilized plant that is growing beyond any expectations.

It's growing very fast. It's rooted and grounded in Him. It's a picture of internal organic growth.

Do we see that in the scripture anywhere? There are two great passages we see it.

1. Jeremiah 17:7, 8—for he's going to spread out, he's going to be like a tree planted by the waters that spreads out its roots by the river. And its leaves shall always be green and he won't worry in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Then the other one is:

2. Psalm 1:1-3—He'll be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season. His leaf also shall not wither and whatsoever he does shall prosper.

We see the abundance of it because his faith is growing.

Now how does our faith grow?

1 Peter 2:2, 3

As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that [WHAT?] you may grow thereby.

Are we growing in our faith? How many verses of scripture have we memorized this year? How much time have we spent in the Word this year?

That immediately gives an indication of our priorities and our spiritual growth. If we're delighting the heart of God by a growing faith, then we don't have any alternative but to get into the book. And the book is where we're going to grow.

Peter ended his second epistle in 2 Peter 3:18 by saying:

2 Peter 3:18

Grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Him be the glory forever and ever.

It's a remarkable thing but Christians who have the insatiable hunger for the Word seem to grow abundantly.

The second thing is:

“the love of each one of you all toward one another is growing even greater;”

That word is FLOOD. There is so much love that it's coming out of the river banks and it's creating a flood.

One of the marks of a born-again believer who is growing in love is they have this great, great compassion for people who are around them and they love.

1 John 3:14

We know we've passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

How do we show that we're delighting the heart of God INWARDLY? By growing in faith by spending time in the book.

How do we show God, how do we delight the heart of God OUTWARDLY? By our love that we're showing to everyone.

Remember that passage in John 7 where Jesus talks about the Holy Spirit? When He comes in it's going to be like rivers of living water that spills out of us:

John 7:38

He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, “From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.”

The manifestation of that is the love that we’re seeing here in this passage.

“FAITH” and “LOVE” are well-fertilized plants and they’re growing faster than normal. That’s delighting the heart of God in what He is seeing in them! Are we delighting the heart of God by a growing faith and in our love?

We end the study with verse 4.

v. 4 therefore, we ourselves are taking pride in you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you are enduring.

“therefore, we ourselves are taking pride in you...”

“We ought to be encouraged,” he says in verse 3.

But he says: “We’re showing you off man. We talk about you.”

We are “taking pride in you among the churches of God...”

WHY?

“...for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you are enduring.”

Our faith is growing and our love is spreading and we are literally going through havoc. They are suffering in Thessalonica, as we’re going to see in just a little bit.

Remember when Paul writes to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 8? He talks to the Corinthians about the fact that they ought to give some money to this relief of the saints fund. But then he talks about the churches in Macedonia. Thessalonica is one of those churches. Listen to what he says:

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given to the churches in Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their own ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

They exceeded all expectations. They begged for the privilege of having a part in that. That’s involves the Thessalonian Christians.

“...for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all of your afflictions...”

Can we make a premise here?

Our faith will grow and our love will intensify in the midst of our suffering if we’re responding to it correctly.

Our faith will grow and our love will intensify in the midst of our afflictions if we’re responding to it properly. God uses this. He knows that He’s going to get glory from what’s just going on in our life. And He knows that we are going to grow through it and He’s going to give us adequate grace to get through it.

So why argue with the adversity we’re facing? God’s going to get the glory out of it. We’re going to grow through it. He’s going to give us the grace to make it if we’ll just open up and trust Him.

Let’s put it this way—kind of came up with a funny little statement:

God’s grace gave them **HOPE TO COPE** and to **HANG ONTO THE ROPE**.

They were hurting.

Listen to these verses:

1 Thessalonians 3:3, 4

so that no one might be deceived in these afflictions; for you yourselves are knowing we're destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we're going to be afflicted; even as also it came to pass, and now you know it.

It's part and parcel of our life and our experience.

We delight the heart of God by our perseverance.

We're going to wait and deal with that word and chase that down in one of the last studies.

Here are a few verses to go with this last verse.

We're talking about the crucible and suffering.

1 Peter 1:6, 7

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials...

1 Peter 4:12, 13

Beloved, don't think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you...

Isaiah 48:10, 11

See, I have refined you, though not as silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.
For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this...

2 Peter 3:18

grow in grace...

The apostle is making it quite clear that perseverance is the result of being victorious in the midst of the suffering that we're facing in our individual lives.

Ruth Harms Calkin says it this way:

Lord, I ask more questions
Than You ask.
The ratio, I would supposed
Is ten to one.

I ask:
Why do You permit this anguish?
How long can it endure?
What possible purpose does it serve?
Have You forgotten to be gracious?
How have I wearied You?
Have I offended You?
Have You cast me off?
Where did I miss your guidance?
Where did I lose the way?

Do You see my utter despair?

And You ask:

Are you trusting me?

(source unknown)

“Yes, are you just trusting Me?”

Here are our lessons we get from our study.

Lesson #1: The safest place to be in the time of trouble is in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson #2: Grace and peace have their source in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson #3: It is necessary for us to experience God’s grace before we can know anything of His peace.

Lesson #4: Paul is a source of encouragement to the Thessalonians in their suffering by giving thanks to God for them.

Lesson #5: Faith and love grow best in affliction.

Lesson #6: The Lord provides grace to hope, to cope, and to hang onto the rope.

Lesson #7: Is your life characterized by perseverance in the midst of your trouble?

Lesson #8: Perseverance in the face of persecution is the mark of a genuine Christian.

Lesson #9: Are you delighting the heart of God by growing in faith and love?

A dear friend of the ministry lost his brother years ago and this verse was important to him:

Deuteronomy 31:8

The Lord Himself goes before you and He'll be with you. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged.

Brennan Manning wrote a book and in it he has the letter of an African Christian pastor who died a martyr's death. This letter was so special. This man was delighting the heart of God.

(The Signature of Jesus by Brennan Manning)

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have the Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I've stepped over the line. The decision has been made—I'm a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, and be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth

knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean in His presence, walk by patience, am uplifted by prayer, and I labor with power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, and my way is rough, and my companions are few, and my Guide is reliable, and my mission is clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the enemy, pander at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops me. And when He comes for His own, He will have no problem recognizing me...my banner will be clear.
(source unknown)

Are we delighting the heart of God?

Zephaniah 3:17

The Lord your God is with you,

He is mighty to saved.
He will take great delight in you,
He will quiet you with His love,
and He will rejoice over you with singing.

Is heaven singing because we are delighting the heart of God?

Father, we pray that Your Holy Spirit would take these four little fragments of verses and make them come alive. Help us to recognize we've learned two things. We can be delighting the heart of God by growing in our faith and abounding in our love. And we pray that Your Holy Spirit would impress us with wanting that to be part and parcel of our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A Practical Study of 2 THESSALONIANS: Delighting the Heart of God

“Learning to Bring Pleasure to God”

Key verse 3:16 — *“Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all!”*

STUDY NUMBER ONE – BY GROWING IN FAITH AND LOVE – 2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-4

KEY VERSE 1:3

v. 1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

v. 2 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

v. 3 We ought always to be giving thanks to God for you, brethren, even as it is fitting, because your faith is growing wonderfully, and the love of each one of you all toward one another is growing ever greater;

v. 4 therefore, we ourselves are taking pride in you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you are enduring.

NOTES

QUESTIONS:

1. Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. Who are the three men that are involved in the ministry there in Thessalonica, according to verse 1?

3. Where do “grace” and “peace” come from, according to verse 2?

4. What is it that characterizes a growing faith?

5. What else is “growing” in their lives besides faith, according to verse 3?

6. How does Paul feel about the Thessalonian saints, according to verse 4?

7. Why is he proud of them, according to verse 4?

8. What are the two things that we need when we face suffering and difficulties in our lives, according to verse 4?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The safest place to be in the time of trouble is in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

LESSON #2: Grace and peace have their source in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

LESSON #3: It is necessary for us to experience God's grace before we can know anything of His peace.

LESSON #4: Paul is a source of encouragement to the Thessalonians in their suffering by giving thanks to God for them.

LESSON #5: Faith and love grow best in affliction.

LESSON #6: The Lord provides grace to hope, to cope, and to hang onto the rope.

LESSON #7: Is your life characterized by perseverance in the midst of your trouble?

LESSON #8: Perseverance in the face of persecution is the mark of a genuine Christian.

LESSON #9: Are you delighting the heart of God by growing in faith and love?