

GOD'S PRESERVING GRACE

Intro: The Christian life has in Scripture often been compared to running a race. So Paul prays for these believers.

- Paul having held out the prospect of deliverance and glory at the coming of Christ is still mindful that we still have to live out our faith in the hard world of men who oppose themselves to the things of God.
- We cannot do this in our own strength, but only in the strength that God supplies. May God strengthen us to this.
- We have confidence in this prayer for preserving grace: Phil. 1:6 Hebrews 12: 2.

I. A PRAYER THAT WE BE COUNTED WORTHY OF OUR CALLING.

- A. A prayer:
 1. Paul proceeds to pray for his friends.
 2. In his previous letter he had counseled them to be unceasing in their prayers (5:17).
 3. Paul now puts his precept into practice.
 4. Paul has been thanking God for them, and has been boasting about them. Now he also prays for them.
- B. What is this calling?
 1. The calling of God is a leading thought in Paul's theology.
 2. It denotes the decisive moment when God calls a person out of darkness into his glorious light (Rom. 8:30).
 3. We must distinguish between the outward call of the gospel and the inward call of the Holy Spirit.
 4. The call is an effectual call, and implies that the person who is called obeys the call.
- C. In what way are we worthy?
 1. This prayer does not have the thought that the Thessalonians might fall away from the status of called people.
 2. When people are called, they are completely unworthy of their call (Gal.1:13-15).
 3. But God does not intend that they remain in this state. They are to walk worthily of their calling.
 4. We must not grow slack in the way. Rather we must seek to be worthy
- D. How can we be worthy.
 1. Paul prays that God will count them worthy.
 2. The idea is that they may so live between this moment and the judgment of God that God pronounces them worthy.
 3. "you" is very emphatic: Paul had a special concern for his readers. Our concern this evening.

II. A PRAYER REGARDING OUR RESOLVE AND WORK OF FAITH

- A. What God must do
 1. In order for us to walk worthy of our calling, God must work in us a two-fold work, a parallel work.
 2. There must a 'desire of goodness' and a 'work of faith'.
 3. These are not two separate things but go hand in hand. The desires are worked out in actual living.
- B. The "**desire of goodness**".
 1. Paul is praying that God will produce a goodness of will in these believers.
 2. This desire has the idea of resolve more than mere wish. There is a resolve, a determination to do good!
 3. It is to will with the heart the things that God wills for us, the will of his commandments.
- C. The "**work of faith**".
 1. Faith is not simply an intellectual attitude which does nothing. Faith is always busy.
 2. A true faith will always clothe itself with its works (James 2:14ff).
 3. So Paul prays that his friends will produce in their lives the works that spring from faith (I Thess. 1:3).
 4. The word "every" in our text applies to both the resolve of goodness and the work of faith.
 5. The Lord demands the whole of our life, not just a part!
- D. The connection between the two:
 1. When Paul asks that God would "fulfill" these things, he implies that no human power is adequate.
 2. The divine is necessary. Paul reinforces this by adding "with power" at the end of the verse.
 3. Paul is not seeking for human reformation, or merely pious thinking.
 4. Necessary is that fruit of goodness that can come about only when the power of God is operative in our lives!

III. A PRAYER WITH A PURPOSE: GLORY.

- A. "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you."
 1. Name does not just identify or distinguish one person from another.
 2. Name sums up the whole character of a person, their personality and their work.
 3. May we so live that glory may be brought to the name of the Lord:
 4. Why glory to God's name? He is the one who is responsible for these virtues in us!
- B. We too will be glorified.
 1. Our glory will result from our association with the Lord. We are in him!
 2. On the judgment day, just as he will be glorified in us because of what we have become, we will be glorified
 3. We are glorified on account of what he is. Lord and Savior!
- C. It is all of grace!
 1. We owe all that we have and all that we are to God.
 2. Grace: joyous free favor of God.
 3. Grace: unmerited kindness to us.
 4. Grace: operative in the whole of process of salvation: accomplished and applied. Of God and Christ!