

Live In a Way Worthy of God

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[0:00] The Bible tells us to do something worthy of God. To do something worthy of God. We saw one of them in the Sunday school, that we should send missionaries away in a manner worthy of God, in a way that's fitting, that God's representatives deserve to be sent.

Today we want to look at one of those other passages, 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 12. And it says there, I'm going to ask you to turn there, but live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and his glory.

So we're going to back up and read verses 10 through 12 to get a little bit of the context. 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 10.

You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous, and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

I guess I hope that you see the connection to the series that we're doing in these afternoons about heaven. Now the word heaven isn't in this verse, but we do have two synonyms for it, God's kingdom and God's glory.

[1:33] So Paul says, you know how we lived among you. We were like fathers with our little children, and we encouraged you, we comforted you, and then we also urged you to live lives worthy of God, who calls us to heaven.

And so we just see right away, as a reminder, what is heaven? Well, it's God's kingdom. It's where God's will is done.

So everything is done God's way. So in God's kingdom, the first commandment and the second commandment are always obeyed by everyone.

So the first commandment, to love God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and strength, is something that everyone in heaven does. And then the second commandment, to love your neighbor just as much as you love yourself, that is also done in heaven.

So God's kingdom is this perfect world of love. Now we don't live in a perfect world of love here, do we? Far, far from it. But in heaven, we will love like we ought.

[2:45] Others will love us. Heaven will be full of lovely people. So it's God's kingdom. And that's why we should pray, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We're asking in that prayer for the way things are done in heaven to be done here. But in heaven, we won't pray that because God's kingdom will have come.

It's also called glory, God's glory. So to live in heaven, again, it's to live in the world of God's glory revealed. It's the perfect display of God's glory.

And so everywhere you look in heaven, you will see glory shining out, shining out of every face, shining out of every flower, out of every tree.

So in heaven, the world becomes this glass through which God's glory shines, his majesty, his loveliness, his splendor.

[3:45] Every flower will radiate with God's glory. And so there won't be any more ugliness inside or outside. There's no more hurt, no more bruises, no more wounds, no more fading, no more dying.

It will be this perfect world that is new and forever new, forever glorious. And God's glory will fill us with joy and with satisfaction and it will heal all of our hurts.

I think I've quoted this before, but someone said, we might come to heaven with tears on our face, but God will wipe away every tear from our eye. So think of the saddest, the most broken things of your life, the things that fill you with grief, the things that pierce your heart with sadness.

In heaven, God's kingdom and God's glory will wipe it all away and we will see the king in all of his glory. So that's heaven.

Now, what I want you to see from this verse is just two things. The first is that God calls you to heaven.

[5:00] God calls you to heaven. He calls you to heaven. It's a present tense. From the first day he gave you ears to hear his voice, he has been calling you heavenward.

So it's not a one-time call. It's a call that is continually going on in your life. God is, so to speak, on the front porch of heaven and he's calling you home.

He wants you to come home to himself and so he's beckoning you. So, God has called each of you by his grace, amazing grace, to say, come in, come in and we are coming.

And so, do we deserve for him to call us home? Do we deserve to go to heaven? Do we deserve for him to say, you may come in? No, I can't think of anything I deserve less than that.

And yet, God's heart is so magnificently full of grace, so magnificently overflowing with kindness that he calls us and he keeps calling us to heaven until at last we get there.

[6:08] He wants us to be where he is. Remember, Jesus prayed, Father, I want my disciples to be with me where I am. And so, here's God our Father calling us to heaven and Jesus himself is praying us to heaven.

So, every day we are getting a step closer. Now, isn't that wonderful that this march that we are on to heaven, it's not something of our own making and it's of our own doing.

God is on the other side calling us, beckoning us, pulling us, leading us to heaven. And so, that's the first thing. It's a wonderful grace in your life that God is calling you to heaven.

That's where you're going to be. Second, our second point, and it's the main idea of this verse, is that Paul says, I want to urge you to live lives worthy of God who calls you into his kingdom and into his glory.

Now, the main point of this is that we want to live lives worthy of God who calls us into heaven.

Now, he's not saying that we earn our way to heaven, that we make ourselves worthy of heaven.

[7:22] If anything, it doesn't really have anything to do with our worth or us making ourselves worthy. If anything, it's the exact opposite. It's saying, live the kind of lives that God deserves, that God has earned, that God should have from us because he has called us into heaven.

And so, that's what I want to think about for the next few minutes. God is calling us heavenward.

That's where we are going. That's where you are going to be. But it's not only the importance of where we are going to be.

The important question is, how are we going to travel? How are we going to show up? How are we going to make this trip? How should we then live? So, Paul is saying it's not just important where we are going, it's how we get there and what we did along the way.

So, the question I have is what does it look like to live a life that God is worthy of? That we live a life where it says, I am going to live in heaven.

What kind of life does God deserve from you? Well, three things. And they all begin with H.

[8:36] And the first is we should live holy lives. Be holy because I am holy. Heaven is a holy place. It's a holy place and God is holy and so the lives that we should lead as we get there, the walk that we should have should be a holy walk.

Paul himself says, you're our witnesses of how, and God is our witnesses of how holy and righteous we were among you who believed. Later on in 1 Thessalonians, Paul says, it is God's will.

Sometimes we wonder, what is God's will for us? What does God want from me? Well, here's a clear direction. This is what God wants from you. It is God's will that you should be sanctified, you should be holy, that you should avoid sexual immorality, that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable.

For God did not call us to be impure, there's that word call again, he did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. So if I really believe that I am going to heaven, that that's my eternal home, that's my address, that's where I'm going, I'm going to show up on that shore someday, I'm going to cross the river of Jordan, and I'm going to land on Canaan shore.

If I really believe that, then I should live a holy life now. God deserves a holy people, a sexually pure people.

[10:11] He called you out of sin. He called you out of that sort of life, from hell. He's called you to everlasting joy, and he deserves purity for that. He's worthy of that.

So sexual immorality, it's always short-sighted. It's never, it never takes the long view. Heaven is never in consideration, it's never the picture, it's never in the picture.

You can't really be thinking and believing that I'm going to live with God in that holy place, and then turn around, and be sexually impure. No, if you're going to do it, you've got to forget the future.

You've just got to forget that it's going to happen. You've got to forget about heaven. You've got to forget about everything. You have to put up an umbrella over your life, so there's no communion between you and God, no communion between you and heaven.

There's nothing above me, there's nothing in front of me, and so that gives me the chance to do it. All I have is this life. But if God has called you to live, or called you to heaven, then he deserves us to be holy.

[11:22] Secondly, not only holy, but he deserves for us to be hopeful. We should live hopeful lives. So pessimistic, resigned, hopeless Christians are Christians who aren't thinking, someday I'm going to live in heaven.

Are they? It's hard to have pessimism and hopelessness and at the same time say, I'm going to live in heaven someday.

now we all get there. I've been there plenty of times. And I don't think a single one of those times that I've been there was I ever thinking of heaven while I was doing it.

So just this week something very frustrating happened. I tried to do something good and I got the exact opposite response I was hoping for. and it went right into my heart and I got disillusioned and disgruntled and I got hopeless about everything.

And then my wife sweetly said, you know, you'll have your reward for that. I didn't get my reward here and she reminded me there's another reward.

[12:34] And it was like a line got thrown out into the water where I was and I hadn't been thinking about heaven. But really behind my wife God was again saying, your reward's up here.

Don't get discouraged. Don't get hopeless. Your reward is here. And so brothers and sisters, God is calling us to heaven. That's where we're going to be.

And so we should be hopeful people. We shouldn't grieve like those who have no hope. We shouldn't watch the news like those who have no hope.

We shouldn't look at anything in this whole world with someone like someone with no hope. No, we have a hope that isn't of this world. That's not attached to the news.

That's not attached to my present circumstances. That's not attached to anything like that. It's something the world can't touch. The world can't reach into heaven and make it disappear.

[13:33] The world can't make heaven not exist. And so we need to think, what is my pessimism and my hopelessness saying? What does that say about God? What does that say about God's promises?

And what does that say about God's heaven? And what he says about where I'm going to be? You know, there are three great virtues. Faith, hope, and love.

Paul says, you know, now these three remain, faith, hope, and love. The greatest of these is love. But right there is hope. Hope should mark the Christian.

God deserves us to be hopeful. He deserves our faith. He deserves us to trust him. He deserves for you to love him.

And you know what else he deserves? He deserves for you to hope in him. And those who hope in the Lord never hope in vain. Now here's the third. Holy, hopeful, and third, happy.

[14:37] Happy. And you see how this comes from. If we're living holy lives and hopeful lives, then that is the recipe for a happy life. But we should live happy lives. And don't get me wrong, there's going to be lots of reasons to mourn here.

We read in Romans chapter 12 that we are to rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn. There's going to be plenty of opportunities and reasons to mourn. To mourn over myself and my sin and my weakness and my frailty.

To mourn over my family and my world and things in the church and things like that, we can't sweep under the rug the sad things of this world.

We can't do that. If the spirit of God is in us, we will grieve sin in our world and in our lives and in our families.

We'll grieve those things because they ruin it. Sin ruins our families and our lives and ourselves. But along with that mourning, brothers and sisters, along with that mourning there should be joy, there

should be happiness.

[15 : 44] The prospect of heaven should be enough to make us happy from day to day. Because we didn't do anything to deserve it. We didn't do anything to earn it.

And yet, God, because of his great love, he called us to it. Because of God's great love, he sent his son to be a new and living way, to be the gate to the road that leads to eternal life.

all the sins that make me so undeserving and so unworthy of heaven, he took them. He suffered for them. He was called a man of sorrows.

He was called a man of sorrows, so we wouldn't have to be called men and women of sorrow. My past is covered. Your past is covered.

Your future is bright. So what kind of people does God deserve? What kind of people reflect well on God? Oh, holy people, hopeful people, and happy people.

[16 : 55] Not glum, not kicking the stone down the road, so sad, Eeyore kind of people, the kind of people that see the rain in every silver lining.

That doesn't honor him. And he didn't do all this for us in order that we would be sad. He didn't wash away all of our sins so that we would just be sad and glum all day and hopeless.

He didn't make us his own children so that we could feel like, oh, there's nothing good in the whole wide world for me. I don't know, sometimes don't you just want your kids to be happy?

Just want them to be happy. Complaining, sad, disappointed kids. We haven't done anything for them, like we don't love them. But that's how we can act toward God. He's never done anything for us.

It doesn't honor him. It should make us ashamed. And so, if that's you right now, in any of those three things that you're not measuring up, and we certainly are all failing in one way or the other year, the remedy then, is to repent, to repent and rejoice, to put the doom and gloom behind us.

[18 : 14] God is for you. He's calling you home. And so, you are on this great journey to heaven, and at the end of it is your father, is your master, is your lord, is your king, is your savior, is your best friend.

And he's called you to this great journey. He's called you to a land that he's going to show you. And so, how should we live? How should we travel?

Not fighting, not bickering, not complaining, not pessimistic, not hopeless, not this is so terrible, everything is so bad, sitting there unrepentant in our sin, unholy lives, insensitive to our sin.

God deserves better than all of that. because he's loved us so much. And then, do you ever get the impression that Jesus himself was a pessimistic, glum guy?

Was he a hopeless, miserable person to be around? No, not at all, was he? Disciples don't leave their businesses and their jobs and their livings to go follow along with someone who's a miserable, sad person, a hopeless person.

[19 : 30] But in Jesus, they found someone who faced everything that we faced. He faced everything we faced, everything you're facing, and yet, at the same time, he faced it and more, and yet, at the same time, he was holy, and he was hopeful, and he was happy.

He was doing the will of his father. He could rejoice in God's sovereign grace. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross scorning its shame. He had in his mind joy.

In his mind he had heaven. He had hope, and that hope gave him grace to persevere in order to save us. And so where do we get the kind of grace to live holy, happy, hopeful lives?

Well, we get it from him. We get it from him. It's a short trip. It's from him to you. It's from you to him. He's got everything you need to live a life worthy of God.

So that's where we want to end, with Jesus. Because to live a life worthy of God, we need to live a life like Jesus, but we also need to live a life depending on Jesus, relying on him.

[20 : 44] So it's all in him. So let's walk hand in hand with Jesus. Let's pray. Our Lord, we do want to live holy, hopeful, happy lives that are worthy of how you called us to heaven.

Father, forgive us for not thinking about heaven more, for not thinking about the glories and the joys and how heaven will cure all of our ills. forgive us for being so short-sighted.

Forgive us for not relying upon Jesus Christ more for our day-to-day needs. Thank you that just as we worship this morning, that we have every reason to rejoice in him, to rejoice again.

But that can be so hard. It can be so difficult, so Holy Spirit, will you bear up our hearts, connect us to Jesus Christ, open the crystal fountain from which the healing waters flow.

Jesus Christ is that fountain. Make his life to overflow in our lives. Make his joy and hope and holiness to overflow in us, that we might live lives like him and that we might live lives depending on him.

[22:12] for the rest of the day. I pray that you would bless our young people, bless Pastor John as he has another couple of speaking situations and occasions, help our young people to grow, to become more heavenly minded and less earthly minded.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.