

“Our Joy and Crown”
1 Thessalonians 2:19-20
(Preached at Trinity, July 7, 2019)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Paul had been defending himself against accusations calling into question the sincerity of his actions towards the Thessalonians. They were accusing him of using them to satisfy his own selfish interests. Paul responds by simply reminding the Thessalonians of his own reputation among them, to recall their personal experience with Paul.
 - A. Paul reminds them of his genuine love for them.

1 Thessalonians 2:7 NAU - "But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children."
1 Thessalonians 2:11 NAU - "you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children,"
 - B. Paul reveals how he had earnestly desired to personally come to them – to see them face-to-face, but that Satan had proved to be a hindrance to his efforts.
2. Paul closes chapter 2 with a wonderful expression of his heart towards the Colossians. He describes them as his joy and crown. Nothing brought Paul greater joy than seeing them prospering in their faith. He is describing them as his reward.
3. The New Testament refers to the Christian crown of *στέφανος* in several ways.
 - A. In 2 Timothy Paul described a “crown of righteousness.”

2 Timothy 4:8 NAU - "in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."
 - B. In 1 Corinthians Paul refers to it as a victor’s crown. He describes it as a reward that is imperishable
1 Corinthians 9:25 NAU - "Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable."
 - C. James refers to a crown given to those who persevere to the end. He calls it a crown of life.

James 1:12 NAU - "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him."

 1. We also read of this crown of life in Revelation
Revelation 2:10 NAU - "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."
 2. We also read of the danger to those who do not persevere
Revelation 3:11 NAU - "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown."

4. Paul had a heart for the church. He cared for them as a father cares for his children
1 Thessalonians 2:11 NAU - "you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children,"
- A. Faithful children bring great joy to their parents
Proverbs 23:24-25 NAU - "The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, And he who sires a wise son will be glad in him. ²⁵ Let your father and your mother be glad, And let her rejoice who gave birth to you."
- B. Nothing brought Paul greater joy than seeing the progress of his converts.
1 Thessalonians 2:20 NAU - "For you are our glory and joy."
- C. This was a present reality for Paul
1 Thessalonians 2:19 NAU - "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation?"
1 Thessalonians 2:20 NAU - "For you are our glory and joy."
- D. For Paul, however, it also had a future application. Paul saw his converts as the fruit of his work that he would present before Christ.
5. This morning I want us to consider this aspect of our work of evangelism and discipleship. The Great Commission is not just making converts, seeing people trust Jesus Christ as Savior. An important aspect of the Great Commission has to do with what happens *after* a person comes to Christ. The work of evangelism is the work of disciple making. It demands making followers of Christ. It demands teaching Christians how to live under the lordship of Christ.
- I. The Great Commission demands keeping a Kingdom perspective
 In the Great Commission we are instructed to make disciples and then teach them how to live in Christ's Kingdom.
- A. Kingdom living means living above this world while living in this world
1. This was Paul's heart and his exhortation to us. Jesus is coming soon, so how then shall we live:
Colossians 3:1-4 NAU - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."
 2. Too often we are tempted to live as if this world is the chief priority
 - a. This was Satan's temptation of Christ – and of us.
 Look chiefly to your physical needs – turn the stones into bread
 Satan keeps our focus upon this present world-
Matthew 4:9 NAU - "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me."
 - b. Jesus' teaching was contrary to this mindset
Matthew 6:31-33 NAU - "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' ³² "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

- c. In the Lord's Prayer our prayer for the advancement of God's Kingdom comes before our prayer for daily bread.
- B. Kingdom living demands keeping an eye upon the return of Christ
1. Paul uses the word *παρουσία*. It refers to the Christian expectation. It is our present hope. We live with an eye towards this blessed hope.
 2. Paul always maintained a steady eye upon the approaching return of Christ. He always lived with expectation, as every Christian does.
 3. At the heart of every believer are the words:
Revelation 22:20 NAU - "Come, Lord Jesus."
 4. Paul used the word "Maranatha" in **1 Cor. 16:22**
It is the translation of the Greek: *μαράνα θά*
It was an Aramaic formula used in early Christian liturgy which was a petition for Christ's return – It literally means, "O Lord, Come"
Or it can mean, "Our Lord is coming" –
The idea in 1 Cor. 16 is, Jesus is coming, and He will judge all those who do not love Him.
1 Corinthians 16:22 NAU - "If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha."
 5. Paul has his eye upon the return of Christ in this passage:
1 Thessalonians 2:19 NAU - "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?"
 6. What effect does the imminent return of Christ have upon your life?
 - a. Most Christians live as if He'll never return. They follow the mindset of the scoffers described by Peter
2 Peter 3:3-4 NAU - "Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."
 - b. When Jesus returns it will be to them a shocking surprise
Matthew 24:36-44 NAU - "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. ³⁷ "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸ "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹ "Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴² "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ "For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*."

II. The Great Commission demands having a right prospective on our reward

A. We are promised an eternal reward

Matthew 5:11-12 NAU - "Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.
¹² "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

1. We await our reward – described as our crown. It is the victor's crown reserved for all who faithfully endure until the end.

Salvation and eternal life should always be seen as the greatest of all rewards. It is a trophy, a crown, a sure reward

2. This eternal reward is the source of great hope and joy for the believer. We press on in hope and expectation

1 Corinthians 15:58 NAU - "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord."

3. Our ultimate reward is to be with Christ, to see Him and spend eternity with Him, clothed in the garments of righteousness.

Romans 6:8 NAU - "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him"

Philippians 3:20-21 NAU - "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

B. For Paul, one of the aspects of his joy and crown was in the saints he had won for Christ. We too should see this great reward

1. We have this as a reward now. The saints of God have great joy in seeing sinners embrace Christ and begin to serve Him. Paul saw his converts as his joy and crown.

Philippians 4:1 NAU - "Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved."

2. But Paul also considered the unimaginable joy in presenting his converts to Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 NAU - "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? ²⁰ For you are our glory and joy."

2 Corinthians 11:2 NAU - "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin."

3. The return of Christ will put everything in perspective. What was your priority in life? What are you living for? What will you have as the measure of your life? We'll be able to see the impact our lives had upon other people.

4. Pastors are promised a reward for faithfully caring for Christ's Bride in His absence. It is called an unfading crown of glory.

1 Peter 5:4 NAU - "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

5. For Paul, the thought of seeing these brothers and sisters standing before Christ on the Day of Judgment and seeing them welcomed brought great joy. Paul saw it as his great reward, his crown of joy.
6. Paul sometimes expressed the fear that some would not be found faithful. He described it as having labored in vain.
Galatians 4:11 NAU - "I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain."
2 Corinthians 11:2-3 NAU - "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. ³ But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."
7. Converts that are found faithfully loving and serving Christ at the end are truly the fruit of our labor. Paul was truly concerned that Christians under his influence would grow in holiness
Philippians 2:14-16 NAU - "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵ so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain."
8. In the context this is one reason Paul so earnestly wanted to see them face-to-face. Paul knew they were facing severe persecution. He wanted to see personally how they were enduring, lest they fall away and his labor was in vain.

Conclusion:

1. Paul believed in salvation by grace alone through faith alone.
Ephesians 2:8-9 NAU - "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."
2. Paul also believed, however, that works are the fruit of saving faith.
Ephesians 2:10 NAU - "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."
3. Paul and James were not at odds with one another as some would suppose. They preached the one and only Gospel.
James 2:20 NAU - "But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?"
4. Paul was overjoyed in seeing Christians bearing fruit and growing in grace.
5. G.K. Beale: "This analysis is a telling polemic against those today who say that people can be saved by a mere profession of faith without consideration of their fruits. Paul believed that an internal genuine faith in Christ's death and resurrection inevitably manifests itself in outward works and that without the latter the former cannot be considered viable. Christians who strive to help others grow and endure in faith will gain confidence about their own faith, now and at Christ's coming."¹

¹ G. K. Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 93.