

Wednesday in the Word
Digging Deeper
June 30, 2021
2 Thessalonians 1:1-5
Worthy of the Kingdom

It must be said. No one except Christ, Himself can ever be worthy of the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom, oddly enough, is actually a very large family. It is a wonderful family with high ideals, perfect parameters and of supreme reputation. It is unknown to most what character is contained in the family we've each come from. It could be guessed that as a representative of your family that you are an example of where you were raised but many times folks might be surprised at the details of our upbringing. Broken or even abusive homes can actually turn out loving, open children yet perhaps with deep wisdom. Solid Christian homes can result in wayward or prodigal offspring. Children may be adopted into a loving family and, being overwhelmed by the generous and fully accepting nature of the new parents, they assume a posture of being sure to be found worthy of the posterity they have acquired. Are you a worthy member of your family? You did not have to earn your place there but you can be obligated to accurately represent them. Here we have the focus of our lesson today. Are you worthy of the Kingdom of God? Let's explore the Greek in our passage for this lesson. The word 'worthy' shows up for us in 2 Thessalonians 1:5. It is accompanied by the word 'counted'. Let's dig in. This two word English phrase 'counted worthy' comes from one Greek word, kataxioō; to deem entirely deserving: - (ac-) count worthy. Are we deemed entirely deserving of heaven?! If so, did we earn that privilege? The Greek ; kataxioō comes from two root words; kata: down in place or time and axioo: to deem fit, which itself is rooted by axios: comparable or suitable. Putting all this together it would seem that there is a place or time in our Christian walk when we become comparable to others who have reached a level of being suitable for the Kingdom of our Lord. Quite obviously our access to heaven is only through accepting the work of Christ on our behalf. He, through great personal cost and sacrifice, earned heaven for us, for whom it is free. Do we deserve it? No. Jesus alone deserves eternal life but at some time, for some reason our Savior counts or considers us as worthy or suitable to be members of His family and to occupy the place of His family home. Understand this. We are not nor can we be worthy of entrance into heaven. He did that for us. But we can live a life that He notices and then counts us as suitable for eternal life. We begin to fit the mindset and display the humble love that is recognizable as being heaven bound. What initiates this transformation? After listing the Godly traits of the believers in Thessalonica in verses 3 and 4, Paul zooms in on the fact that these qualities were displayed during persecutions and tribulations. Could this be the key to reaching the height of the Christian life? We'd like to think the best Christians are generous, gentle, loving and joyful but Paul speaks of them having faith, love and patience while bearing up under the load of mistreatment by enemies of the cross and constant pressures and troubles from the evil one. Suffering. The worthiness of living in the Kingdom of Christ results from representing Him during the hardest and most difficult times in life. Dare we say that few in America suffer in any way close to believers around the world who endure beatings, starvation, crime, violence and death all for fidelity to their Lord and Savior. Even they cannot earn eternal life but it can be said they are worthy of it. While none of us desires to truly suffer for Jesus and most of us will not ever have to, we must look at our blessed lives and commit to being a living sacrifice in His service.

How much do we endure compared to our persecuted brothers and sisters? Please remember to pray for them and ask the Heavenly Father to step in and miraculously save them from their tormentors. Now let us consider this. How and why does suffering mistreatment and persecution and struggling with intense pressure result in our being counted worthy by Christ? While He earned our salvation and lovingly accepts any who put their trust in Him it seems He gains respect for those who endure hardship while displaying His Godly qualities. How does suffering intensify our walk with Christ? Hope displayed through patience during suffering; Romans 8:16-25. Selflessly turning personal suffering into the comfort of others; 2 Corinthians 1:3-10. Finding fellowship with Christ in suffering for and with Him; Philippians 3:7-14. Rejoicing in being counted worthy to continue the sufferings of Christ in our own body; Colossians 1:19-24. Fully understanding the purpose and outcome of suffering; James 5:10-11. Absorbing wrongful suffering to Glorify Christ our example. 1 Peter 2:18-24. More could be added here but the teaching of the Lord is clear. When the Righteous suffer for the Glory of Christ, He takes notice and rewards His faithful children. For more, consider the following; Revelation 2:7, 17, 26-27, 3:5, 12, 20-21. There is much more awaiting us in heaven than we can know. Struggle and suffer with faith and praise for our God. It will all make sense when we know we have been considered Worthy of the Kingdom.