

Thessalonians

A Careful Study Of Thessalonians

January 02, 2022

I. Introduction

A. **2 Thessalonians 3:1-3** . . . Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; [2] and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. [3] But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

B. Pray

II. Pray for the church, its leaders, and evangelism

A. [3:1a] Finally, brethren, pray for us – *that is, continue or keep on praying for us.*

1. Paul made a similar request in **1 Thessalonians 5:25**, “Brethren, pray for us.”
2. Why? Because Paul and those who ministered with him met serious opposition in a number of places. And as we learned from **1 Thessalonians 2:18 & 3:5**, the opposition was not only from the religious Jews and unbelievers, it was also from Satan, himself.
 - a. An example of what Paul faced is found in **2 Corinthians 11:23-29**, “Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. [24] Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. [25] Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. [26] I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; [27] I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. [28] Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. [29] Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?”
3. As we can see from this portion of scripture, Paul had good reason to seek the prayer support of not only the church in Thessalonica,

- but other churches as well. And we know he made similar requests in letters to other churches from the following scriptures.
- a. **Romans 15:30-32**, “Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to **strive together with me in your prayers** to God for me, [31] that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; [32] so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company.”
 - b. **2 Corinthians 1:10-11**, “[God] delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, [11] you also joining in helping us **through your prayers**, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.”
 - c. **Philippians 1:18-20**, “What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, [19] for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance **through your prayers** and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, [20] according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”
 - d. **Philemon 1:22**, “At the same time also prepare me a lodging, for I hope that **through your prayers** I will be given to you.”
4. We Christians in the western free world have not had to face the kind of threatening, painful, unjust, and personally costly treatment from the community around us, or the government, or the religious institutions of our day that Paul and the believers of his day faced. However, like Paul, we face two formidable foes.
- a. **First**, like all God’s people from Adam and Eve onward, we are opposed and attacked by the devil and his minions.
 - (1) And though we do not see them, their opposition is just as powerful, just as deceptive, and just as damaging to our well-being and the spiritual health of the church as it was to Adam and Eve.
 - (2) Therefore, the scriptures warn us in **Ephesians 6:12**, that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this

darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (*the devil and his minions*).

- (3) And this is why Paul ends that section with these words, “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, [19] and pray on my (*Paul’s*) behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, [20] for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (**Ephesians 6:18-20**).
- (4) The devil is a real threat to our own spiritual well-being and the spiritual health of the church – so I urge all of us to take this threat seriously and to remain alert, because he is prowling around like a hungry lion looking for Christians who are easy preys he can devour them (**1 Peter 5:8**).
- b. The **second** formidable foe is not as obvious as human persecutors, or as painful as being ostracized by your family, denied employment, having your house set on fire, or beaten and imprisoned.
 - (1) However, this foe is just as effective at weakening our trust in the goodness and protection of God, at distracting us from an intentional pursuit of godliness, and at stalling or stunting our spiritual growth. So who is this formidable foe?
 - (2) This foe is made up of the two cultures in which we live –
 - (a) The **first** culture is the worldly-minded, money obsessed, science worshipping, pleasure seeking, self-serving culture outside the church.
 - (b) The **second** culture in which we live is the fleshly, double-minded, entertainment seeking, self-gratifying, spiritually immature culture within the church.
 - (3) In my opinion, the influence of these two cultures is as damaging to the growth of genuine Christianity, the practice of sincere godliness, and the spiritual health of the church as any form of persecution we know of.
5. The point I am trying to make is that the foes we face in the western free world are just as formidable as the foes Paul and the Christians of his day faced. Therefore, if it was wise in Paul’s day to continuously pray for God to work against their foes and to help them remain faithful, then it is equally wise in our day.

B. Paul follows his general request for continued prayer with two specific things to pray for. And though we talked about them in a general way, I want to address both of them in more specific ways.

1. **First, [3:1b]** Paul exhorts us to pray that the word of the Lord will keep on spreading rapidly (*without interference, hindrance, or deterrence*) and keep on being glorified (*be seen as coming from God, as containing the directions to eternal salvation, and as the truth about how to live*), just as it did also with you (*the Thessalonians*);
 - a. Paul refers to the Thessalonians' response to the gospel in **1 Thessalonians 2:13**, "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."
 - b. Paul makes a similar statement about the response to the gospel in Rome in **Romans 6:17-18**, "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, [18] and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."
 - c. That the word of God would continue spreading and receive this kind of response is what Paul is asking the believers of his day to pray for.
 - d. What do you pray for in relation to evangelism in general? What do you pray for in relation to the efforts of our missionaries, or your own evangelistic efforts?
 - (1) The idea in studying the scriptures and teaching on what it says is to learn from it.
 - (2) And so I am encouraging each of us to consider what we are asking God for in relation to evangelism, and if we are not including the request Paul made here in **vs 1**, then let's add it to our prayers.
2. **Second, [3:2]** Paul exhorts us to pray that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men (*who are out to harm us in an effort to stop us from preaching and teaching the word of God*); for not all have faith.
 - a. At the time Paul wrote **1&2 Thessalonians**, he was doing missionary work in Corinth. And possibly in response to his prayers and the prayers of other believers, the Lord, in a vision, assured Paul of safety and of more unbelievers repenting and coming to faith.

- (1) We read this in **Acts 18:9-11**, “And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; [10] for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city.’ [11] And [Paul] settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”
 - (2) However, though Paul had a period of safety in the midst of open opposition and persecution, this was not his common experience, as we know from **2 Cor. 6:4-10 & 11:23-29**.
 - b. The reality is, we western Christians have not as yet had to face perverse and evil people committed to persecuting Christians and stamping out Christianity.
 - (1) But as I have already said, we face a culture, inside and outside organized religion, that increasingly is calling evil good and good evil. And it is increasingly misusing the word of God to justify itself.
 - (2) Therefore, because we are surrounded by a growing evil that substitutes darkness for light and light for darkness, and that presents itself as wiser, more compassionate, and more loving than God and the word of God, we ought to be praying against this evil and for protection from its influence.
 - c. Possibly these two exhortations from Jesus fit here.
 - (1) **Matthew 9:37-38**, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. [38] Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”
 - (2) **Matthew 26:41**, “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation.”
- C. **Vs 2** ends with these words, “for not all have faith.” And **vs 3** begins with, “But the Lord is faithful.” Or we could say it this way, “Not all trust in God, but God is always trustworthy.”
1. To me, this contrast presents two valuable pictures.
 - a. **First**, it presents a contrast between the fickleness of humanity and the faithfulness or trustworthiness of God. Paul spoke about this contrast in **2 Timothy 2:13**, “If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.”
 - b. **Second**, this contrast reminds us of the importance of faith to being godly or Christ-like.

- (1) It was those who did not trust in God and therefore did not accept the word of God who were persecuting Christians and trying to stop the spread of Christianity.
- (2) In the same way, faith in God leads to accepting the word of God and moving forward to live accordingly.
- (3) The reality is, there is no true and lasting godliness without trust in God, and the more complete our trust, the more complete our godliness.

D. [3:3] But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

1. Notice the order of God's work in you and for you.
 - a. **First**, He works **in you** to strengthen you so that you have the power to withstand temptation, persecution, pain, and suffering.
 - b. **Second**, He works **for you** by protecting you from being harmed or mistreated or experiencing pain and suffering beyond the limits of the strength He has worked into you.
2. God does not save us and bring us into the Christian life – and then abandon us like too many human fathers have done.
 - a. God fathers us from beginning to end, and one of the fatherly things He does is build up our spiritual strength so that we become strong in faith and godly in practice.
 - b. And He constantly stands guard against anything the devil or the world throws at us in order to protect us from anything that is more than our God-given strength is able to endure or resist.
3. In other words, God is to us what He was to David when David faced Goliath.
 - a. God is to us what He was to Joseph when he was sold into slavery by his brothers, wrongly accused, and left in prison.
 - b. God is to us what He was to Daniel when he faced the lions den for praying to someone other than the king for 30 days.
 - c. God is to us what He was to the believers listed in the first half AND the second half of **Hebrews 11**.
 - d. God is to us what He was to Jesus – at His birth, through His first 30 years, during His ministry years, the cross, His resurrection, and His ascension.
4. Therefore, we read in **Romans 8:31b-32, 38-39**, If God is for us, who is against us? [32] He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? [38] For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor

angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

III. Conclusion

- A. We live in a world threatened by all sorts of evil and evil people. Yet regardless of the threats, we have God's empowerment and protection to see us through these challenging times. And we have prayer.
- B. May we make it our aim in this new year to pray more, to pray more specifically for the spread of God's word, to pray for the acceptance of God's word, and to pray for protection from the insidious influences of the evil within the two cultures in which we live.