

**While I'm Waiting
(Week 17)
2 Thessalonians 3:1-5
"Pray For Us"**

Introduction

But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father Who is in secret. And your Father Who sees in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:6

Prayer: it is the most powerful thing that a Christian possesses, and yet, it is seldom utilized to its full potential. Jesus gave His life on the cross, so that our connection with God The Father could be re-established, and once again, we could go to Him in prayer and instantly be heard. And yet, when you ask Believers what area of their Christian walk is the most lacking, most will honestly answer that it is in their prayer life. *The Bible* is filled with examples of prayers to help us understand just how this works. I personally believe that if a church gets its praying right, then it will see a wondrous work of God in its midst. Prayer is the key to it all, when it comes to being an effective servant of Christ.

This reality was **not** lost on the Apostle Paul. And we see many of his prayers, for the churches that he planted, interwoven into the fabric of the personal letters that he sent them. Paul was most definitely a "prayer warrior". But I find it interesting that this incredible man of faith and prayer requested that those "baby Christians" in Thessalonica pray for HIM! There is a powerful lesson here, that has most likely gone unnoticed by many. It doesn't matter how long you've been saved, **your** prayers are just as potent and effective as those of someone who has walked with God for decades! If you are in Christ, then God hears your prayers, my friend. Paul knew full well that the prayers of the fledgling church in Thessalonica were powerful and effective. He could see for himself that God was in their midst. So he asked them to pray for him at the close of his letter. And, he also reminded them that he was in constant prayer for them as well.

Now, when we, as the Church, gather together for corporate prayer, the requests that we offer are usually fairly consistent. All around the room we hear multiple request for those who are ill and in need of healing. Don't get me wrong, we are supposed to pray for the sick. The book of *James* tells us:

Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone cheerful? He should sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of The LORD. The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and The LORD will raise him up; if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.

James 5:13-16

So, of course, we are commanded to pray for the sick. However, there is so much more that we are supposed to pray for. How about the success of the Great Commission? If it is truly the purpose of The Church to make disciples, then why do we not see more prayers to help us actually go out and **make disciples?!** It would seem to me that if our priorities are as they should be, then this particular prayer request would always be on our hearts and on our lips. But you rarely hear someone in church raise their hand and say, "Pray for me that I would be able to go and make disciples." Why is that? Could it be that we have become so consumed with our own personal desires and ambitions that they have crowded out all concern for those who are perishing? God forbid!

Paul's main goal in life was to reach the lost world with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that those he had reached would grow in the faith until they reach maturity. These were the very things that got him up in the morning and were the last things on his mind when he lay down at night. It is time for the Church of Jesus Christ to be "re-consumed" with the passion of our purpose. To stop focusing on the temporal and look to the eternal. Now is the time to pray for the *Success, Safety, Strength, and Steadfastness* of God's chosen people, as they look to the task at hand.

Success (vs.1)

In addition, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the Word of The LORD may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.... **2 Thessalonians 3:1**

As was stated earlier, Paul was consumed with spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the responsibility of every believer to share Christ with the lost world. In Paul's case, this led him to travel abroad as a missionary/evangelist. He never knew where he would be sent next, but every where that he traveled, he displayed the same zeal to reach the people of that region for Christ. He pleaded with them to hear the message and be saved. As a result, he got run out of town a lot! But many believed, and to Paul, that made it all worthwhile.

Not all of us are called to travel the world as Paul did, but we are to be missionaries none the less. Our mission field may very well be the places that we have been "planted". Just as the Thessalonians were left behind to evangelize Thessalonica, we have been placed where we are to do exactly the same. We are called to be missionaries on our jobs, at school, in our homes, to our neighbors and wherever we go. How many people would come to know Christ in our area, if we were consumed with the same zeal for the mission that had consumed Paul? Suffice to say, I believe that our churches would be exploding with growth. Would you agree? Then maybe it is time that we started fervently praying together as a church body for the success of the gospel! That the Word of God would be spread rapidly in our area, just as it did in Thessalonica. Everyone there knew that God was up to something. Even those who didn't believe could see the amazing results with their own eyes, and it infuriated them!

Notice that Paul wasn't asking them to pray that he be accepted, loved, and successful, but rather, he asked them to pray that The WORD would be successful. It is The Word of God that changes lives. Not some "feel good" message that tells the masses that they are just fine the way that they are. NO! We need to share the message of repentance from sin, and the redemption found only in **The Blood of Jesus**. There are more than enough "preachers" out there dedicated to the "I'm ok and you're ok" message of Satan's lies. We need to be about letting the world know that God sent His only Son to die for their sins, and that in Him they can find the forgiveness that they so desperately need. We need to be spreading the message rapidly, that Christ alone is the Only Way to be reconciled with a Holy God. Period. This gospel message is the very thing that Paul requested the church at Thessalonica to be perpetually praying for (that is what the word he used in Greek means), and it should be our number one priority as well. So, how fervently are you praying that you and your church are successfully spreading The Word of God? For in the end, nothing else really matters.

Safety (vs. 2)

...and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not all have faith. **2 Thessalonians 3:2**

Spiritual warfare is real. No one knew this better than the Apostle Paul. Everywhere that he preached, he was met with fierce opposition. Mainly from those who claimed to love God, namely the Jews. The Thessalonians were also fully aware of such opposition. The persecution that they faced for the sake of the gospel of Christ was intense. So Paul requested that they pray for his deliverance from such evil people, just the same as he was undoubtedly praying for their church as well. If you are planning to take a stand for Jesus in this world, be prepared to face criticism and opposition. It just goes with the deal. Jesus tells us not to be surprised when the world hates you.

If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. **John 15:18-19**

If you are one of those people who needs everyone to love them, then... Christianity is going to come as a huge shock to your system. For it simply does not work that way for the child of God. I am never surprised, when I get opposition from lost people. In fact, I expect it. But can I share with you, what has surprised me several times over the years as I endeavor to be faithful to God's calling on my life? It is the opposition that I get from those who are within the church. I have known several "church

folks”, who have absolutely done everything that they could possibly do to hinder my ministry. Why is that, you might ask? Well, Paul has answered that question for us in this text.

...for not all have faith. (vs. 2b)

Let that sink in for a moment. Could it be that there are many within the church who are still in their sins and have not been regenerated by The Spirit of The Living God. Answer: Absolutely! The church is filled with lost and ungodly people. They think that they are saved, but they are themselves altogether deceived. They have a form of godliness (small “g”), but deny its very power (**2 Timothy 3:5**). They may be very religious indeed, but they lost. This is the only explanation as to why they would stand in opposition to those whom God has called.

I recently had to counsel someone, who was a staff member of a church who had been viciously attacked by one of its so called “members”. I was able to do this, because it has happened to me many times. This person was simply trying to spread the gospel message, as they had been hired to do, but rather than support this person, one particular “saint” decided it was their place to critique everything this staff member did. The church is filled to the brim with these kinds of discouragers. I am quite certain that this is more often than not, the cause of a demonic effort to make us all want to throw up our hands and resign from the church. After all, that’s what the devil does isn’t it? He works to discourage us and to make us so miserable and downtrodden that we will quit the ministry. It’s what the religious Jews had done to the church at Thessalonica, and it’s what Satan often does to us today. He uses “religious” people to tear us down, when we try and make disciples. **For not all have (the) faith.**

If you are suffering this type of persecution from someone such as this today, my advice to you is to turn that person over for The LORD’S discipline and keep right on doing what God has called you to do. It’s what Paul did, it’s what the Thessalonians did, and it’s what we are to do as well. Pray that God will deliver us from wicked people, who are quick criticize but will never lift a finger to help. One thing that I have learned from my numerous critics over the years, is that they know everything about how I should do *my* job, but they don’t ever do anything *themselves*. Perhaps that is why they are always so angry? Is it because when they see us actually trying to be faithful servant of Christ, it exposes the stark reality that they are doing absolutely NOTHING, stirring within them a jealous hatred as a result? Our prayer is that God will deliver those of us, who long to do the work of the kingdom, from these evil and wicked people... Amen.

Strength (vs. 3-4)

But The LORD is faithful; He will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. We have confidence in The LORD about you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command.
2 Thessalonians 3:3-4

Paul was thoroughly convinced that despite everything that they had suffered, God would see to it that the strength of the church at Thessalonica would prevail. This is what God does, when we are in a constant state of prayer for His power in our lives. He makes us strong. We could never hope to stand firm against the wiles of the devil apart from the armor of God.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens. For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand.
Ephesians 6:12-13

And how, you might ask, do I avail myself of this armor? The simplest answer to putting on the armor of God is to “put on” Christ. To abide in Him through prayer and the Word of God, and He will give you strength to face the trials and tribulations of this life. The Thessalonians zeal for The LORD kept them in full reliance upon His mighty power, and that was why Paul was able to become so very convinced that they would be able to press on. They loved God, and therefore, they relied upon His strength.

Fredrick Douglas is reported to have said, “One plus God is a majority”. This statement is only true, because our God is a majority in and of Himself. When I align my will to His, then I become an

unstoppable force. This is when my weakness becomes strength, when I have finally learned enough about myself, to know that I am nothing, apart from Him! Pray that we will all stand firm in the strength of The LORD as we set out to obey the Great Commission. Do you feel inadequate in your mission to spread the gospel of Christ today? Could it be because you are trying to accomplish this goal in your strength, and not His? Or is it simply because you have not been trying at all? Pray for the strength to take your stand, wrapped completely in the armor of The Almighty, Everlasting God. Then stand firm. Your victory is assured.

Steadfastness (vs. 5)

May The LORD direct your hearts to God's love and Christ's endurance. 2 Thes. 3:5

The text in this verse is a bit ambiguous in the original Greek and has been, therefore, a bit of a challenge to accurately translate. The KJV translates this verse:

And the LORD direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. 2 Thessalonians 3:5 KJV

And it is completely understandable that the translators would render it this way, considering that the theme of the entire letter is primarily focused on the second coming of Christ. There is but one small problem with this translation, the Greek word for "wait" or "waiting" is nowhere in the text. Therefore, as tempting as it may be to translate in a manner very fitting for the context, it more than likely should not be read this way.

Paul is instructing the Thessalonians to remain in God's love and to remain in Christ's endurance. The word that he uses here translated endurance, "*hypomone*" (pronounced hoop-om-on-ay') means a patient, steadfast, sustaining perseverance. And what he is saying here is that we must have the "steadfastness of Christ" as we live in persecution here in this world. So, rather than telling them to patiently wait upon Christ, which he has already instructed them to do, he now is telling them that while they are waiting, they are to patiently endure with "Christlike" endurance. I am reminded here of the description of Jesus in the book of *Hebrews*:

...Let us run with endurance (hypomone) the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before Him, He endured (hypomene) the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1b-2

Did you catch that? Jesus patiently, steadfastly endured the cross, with joy in His heart, because He knew that the end result would be glorious. It was the "**joy that lay before Him**", that enabled Him to remain steadfast in His earthly mission. The same is true for us as well. We can be steadfast during our trials and tribulations with the knowledge that joy also awaits for us:

We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, and who are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

So rest assured, child of God, this life is not all that there is. Everlasting joy is waiting on the other side for those who are in Christ Jesus. And, in fact, the infallible proof that we know Him is made evident by our patient endurance, knowing that nothing can separate us from His love (**Romans 8:37-39**). Real Christians are **guaranteed** to make it to the finish line, my friends. So be steadfast, steadfast with Christ-like endurance, knowing that our joy lies just ahead. God will see to it that you get there, if you are truly born again. If you have not, then repent, for today is the day salvation (**2 Corinthians 6:2**). Go from being a discourager to an encourager, from a stumbling block to a disciple maker. Run the race with the joy that has been set before you.

So pray. Pray for one another, that we will have success as we spread the Word of God. Pray that we shall be delivered from those who are bent upon the evil that motivates them to hinder our great calling. Pray that we will go in the strength and steadfastness of The LORD. So that through us, others may find the great salvation of our God.

And let His faithful say... TRUTH!!!