

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

Importance for Prayer

1

Introduction

Verses 1-5 provide insight into Paul's heart regarding what he wanted from the people he shepherded. These are true of what any devoted pastor desires from his people. Today we will look at the importance of prayer!

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2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it is* with you, ² and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. ³ But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the evil one. ⁴ And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. ⁵ Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

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A Pastor's Desire

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Paul was a gifted and effective minister of God. His credentials and abilities were impressive, but his effectiveness was not based in those qualities. Listen to what He writes to the Colossians, "To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily" (Col. 1:29). He placed no confidence in the flesh but knew that whatever ministry success he enjoyed was due to the power of God at work in and through his life. Since he depended on the Lord for every aspect of his ministry, he frequently requested his people to pray for him (Rom. 15:30–32; Eph. 6:19–20; Col. 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:25; Philem. 22; cf. 2 Cor. 1:11; Phil. 1:19).

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Paul faithfully prayed for those he ministered to, but he likewise needed their prayers. In his travels he constantly faced difficulty, danger, and loneliness. He usually preached to audiences who did not want to hear him and at places to which people did not invite him in the first place (Acts 17:16–34; 26:24–32). He depended on God's power to strengthen and sustain him (1 Cor. 2:1–16; 2 Cor. 4:1–15; 6:3–10; 10:7–18; 12:7–10; Phil. 3:7–14; Col. 1:24–29; 1 Tim. 1:12–17; cf. Acts 16:6–10; 18:9–11; 23:11; 27:22–26), and he knew the prayers of believers before God's throne opened that divine power through him.

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Finally here does not mean that Paul is getting ready to conclude his letter, rather it is a transition from the letter's doctrinal content to its practical content. Paul is changing the topic from eschatology to matters of practical sanctification.

First he invited the Thessalonian **brethren** to **pray for us**. Paul is including his coworkers in his request for prayer. The tense of the word **Pray** carries the idea of a continuing pattern and not a single one-time event. Paul wanted the church to in a habitual pattern of prayer for him and his fellow workers. This reveals that Paul was not depending on his own abilities but an understanding that only God can change hearts. It also show the importance that we should be praying for each other. Prayer is not just an obligation, but a privilege.

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The first specific request Paul made was for the success of his message, which he identified as the word of the Lord. The inspired writers of the Old and New Testaments often use that phrase to refer to divine revelation. The New Testament writers most frequently associate it with the gospel (cf. Acts 8:14, 25; 13:5, 44, 46, 48, 49; 15:35–36; 16:32; 19:10, 20). The word of the Lord comes first as the good news of salvation, after salvation it is the divine revelation of God for growth and understanding.

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Paul's passion was that the gospel of salvation would run swiftly and be glorified. That he wrote to the Thessalonians from Corinth, where there was much hostility and overt opposition to Paul's preaching (cf. Acts 18:4–6), revealed his heightened passion for the gospel.

Run swiftly literally means "to speed on," or "to make progress" (cf. Ps. 147:15; Acts 19:20). Paul wanted them to pray that the Word would advance like a strong runner, moving ahead unobstructed and unhindered, to attain new ground. That concern was always on his heart because he lived for the successful preaching of the gospel. He would later write to the Ephesians, "[Pray] for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19).

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Be glorified means to be praised, honored, and exalted, and expresses Paul's desire that the Gospel be received with the proper respect, that people would accept and affirm it as the saving truth of God. Paul knew that as he presented the Gospel, many would reject it, but he also knew that God would work in hearts and that others would embrace it by faith. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to pray for the same acceptance would take place just as it had with them. He adds just as it is with you.

At the initial preaching of the gospel in Thessalonica, both Jews and Gentiles believed. It was only a little later, when more and more Gentiles believed, that some unbelieving Jews violently objected to what was happening (vv. 5–9). But overall, the Thessalonians had had a positive response to the gospel (1 Thess. 1:5–9), and Paul longed for that to occur among other peoples in other places (cf. 1 Tim. 2:3–4).

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Second, Paul asked the Thessalonians to pray for the safety of the gospel messengers (cf. Rom. 15:30–31). As already noted from the book of Acts (see also 18:12–17), Paul constantly faced hostility for his ministry. Therefore, he asked them to pray that that they may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. The apostle was not concerned merely about self-preservation or personal comfort and safety (2 Cor. 4:7–12; 11:22–33; Phil. 1:19–30; 3:7–14; Col. 1:24–29); but he did desire that God would protect him as he ministered (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8–10); otherwise, people would not hear his message.

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Paul identified the source of danger as from unreasonable and wicked men. Unreasonable literally means “out of place,” and denotes what is unbecoming or inappropriate (cf. Luke 23:41; Acts 25:5; 28:6). Here it refers to men who were improper, wrongfully out of place, unrighteous, or as one writer described them, “morally insane.” As if to underscore how dangerous those men were, Paul further described them with the adjective evil, meaning “malignant,” or “aggressively wicked.” He desired deliverance from the threats and power of such enemies of the gospel whom Satan used to prevent his companions and him from preaching the saving message (cf. 1 Thess. 2:18).

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The believers in Thessalonica probably assumed that because they had received the gospel so eagerly, such positive response was normal for everyone who heard the message. But their acceptance was far from the pattern for many, so Paul cautioned them that not all have faith. It is a reality when sharing the gospel that not all will believe. It is interesting that those who reject the Grace of God often become hostile. The book of Acts records how Paul was beaten, stoned, and put in prison by those rejecting the Gospel. This reality moved Paul to call the Thessalonians to pray that as he and his companions preached **the word** of the gospel, it would triumphantly go forth unhindered and be believed.

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So What ...

It is easy to complain about the world, but we need to pause and ask ourselves what we really need to get out of these dark times. Many are putting their trust in upcoming elections. Though we should vote, at best this is a temporary fix against the evil that lurks behind the scenes. What the world truly needs is the gospel message and revival. We should be praying that the Gospel message would sound forth in boldness. Recognizing that evil does not want to be exposed and will not leave quietly, we should pray that God will put protection around our pastors, missionaries, and other Biblical organizations.