



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V25 N29

July 16, 2023

LIVING HOPE

"For the Win"

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Prayer

I pray to God to know him, to lay my request before him, and to find direction for my daily life.

"Come and hear, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me. I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!"

Psalms 66:16-20



Q?

Why pray and for what?

Philip Yancey has written an insightful book on prayer entitled, *Prayer: Does it Make any Difference?* In it he explores many of my personal frets and musings on the matter. I believe in prayer – more about why later – but not because I can prove its effectiveness. I've received good things I haven't prayed for and not received good things I have. What's more, I've likely missed out on good things I could have received had I prayed. After all, James says in King James English, "ye have not because ye ask not" (4:2).

On the question, "Does Prayer Matter?" Yancey writes: "After surveying Jesus' practice of prayer, I realize that his example does answer one important question about prayer: Does it matter? When doubts creep in and I wonder whether prayer is a sanctified form of talking to myself, I remind myself that the Son of God, who had spoken worlds into being and sustains all that exists, felt a compelling need to pray. He prayed as if it made a difference, as if the time he devoted to prayer mattered every bit as much as the time he devoted to caring for people . . . Jesus clung to prayer as to a lifeline, for it gave him both the guidance and the energy to know and to do the Father's will . . . Skeptics raise questions about prayer's usefulness: If God knows best, what's the point? As one pastor asked me, 'Should I just stop bothering him with my petty requests for myself and others, and let God get on with the business of running the universe while I do my best to take care of things down here?' To such questions, I have no better answer than the example of Jesus, who knew above any of us the wisdom of the Father and yet who felt a strong need to flood the heavens with requests. Although Jesus offered no metaphysical proofs of the effectiveness of prayer, the very fact that he did it establishes its worth. 'Ask and you will receive' he said frankly, a rebuke to anyone who considers petition a primitive form of prayer. When his disciples failed in their attempts to heal an afflicted boy, Jesus had a simple explanation: lack of prayer" (80-81). Evidently, God's "business of running the universe" involves, among a myriad of other things, answering our prayers.

I believe in prayer because Jesus prayed and

and taught his disciples to pray. I also believe in prayer because Paul, following in Jesus' steps, also prayed. Reading his letters to the Thessalonians is proof enough of that. His letters contain frequent allusions to his prayers for them as well as requests that they pray for him. In the opening of his first letter, he writes: "We," that is, he, Silas and Timothy (1:1), "always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers" (v. 2). And later in a wish-prayer, he writes: "May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones" (3:12-13). Finally, in the closing, he writes: "Pray for us" (v. 25).

In the opening of his second letter, recognizing that his previous intercessory prayer (cf. 3:12-13) has been answered, he accepts the obligation to thank God. He writes: "We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing" (1:3). Answered prayer appears to incentivize the apostle to pray even more for his readers. In the same chapter, he writes: "We constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith" (v. 11; cf. 2:16-17). And again in the closing, he asks the Thessalonians to pray for him (3:1-2). Such requests for the prayers of his readers are characteristic of Paul (Ro 15:30-31; Eph 6:18-19; Col 4:3; Phm 22). One commentator writes: "Paul was deeply convinced of the power of prayer. His strong sense of his continual need for divine empowerment motivated his efforts to enlist the prayers of others on his behalf. It also assured his readers that by praying for the missionaries, the converts were participating in the spread of the gospel" (D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 360). The fact that Jesus, the Son of God, and Paul, the super-apostle, both felt the need to pray, makes me feel I need to as well.



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

1 As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. 2 And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. 4 We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

Read in other translations

1 Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, 2 and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. (ESV)

1 Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we ask you to pray for us. Pray that the Lord's message will spread rapidly and be honored wherever it goes, just as when it came to you. 2 Pray, too, that we will be rescued from wicked and evil people, for not everyone is a believer. 3 But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. 4 And we are confident in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we commanded you. 5 May the Lord lead your hearts into a full understanding and expression of the love of God and the patient endurance that comes from Christ. (NLT)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Bracket "As for other matters" in v. 1.
- Underline "pray" in vv. 1, 2.
- Bracket "of the Lord" in v. 1.
- Circle "spread rapidly" in v. 1.
- Circle "be honored" in v. 1.
- Box "just as" indicating *comparison* in v. 1.
- Bracket "wicked and evil people" in v. 2.
- Bracket "for not everyone has faith" in v. 2.
- Box "But" indicating *contrast* in v. 3.
- Circle "May" in v. 5.
- Circle "God's love" in v. 5.
- Circle "Christ's perseverance" in v. 5.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Paul asks the Thessalonian believers to pray for him, Silas, and Timothy (v. 1). This makes sense in light of 1 Thessalonians 5:28 and 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17. How so?
 2. Identify his twofold request introduced by “that” (vv. 1, 2).
 3. To what exactly does “the word of the Lord” (ESV) refer?
 4. The expression “spread rapidly and be honored” (v. 1) alludes *metaphorically* to athletic games. See note and explain.
 5. Explain the *comparison* in verse 2.
 6. Identify the *wicked evil people* from whom Paul wanted to be delivered (see Ac 18:12-17; cf. 17:5-9; 13-15).
 7. Explain the *contrast* in verse 3.
 8. Paul has “confidence” (v. 4). Concerning *what* and *why*? And *why* bother expressing it?
 9. Describe the *effects* that a fuller comprehension and appreciation of “God’s love” and “Christ’s perseverance” would have on believers.
 10. **Discussion:** Paul asks for prayer (vv. 1-2) and prays (v. 5) for a number of things. Talk about how we can pray regarding the same things.
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Commentary On The Text

The concluding section of Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, 3:1-15, is introduced by a term (*to loipon*; cf. 1Th 4:1) that many other English versions translate "Finally" (ESV, NLT, HCSB, NET, NKJV, et al.), but the NIV better translates it "As for other matters," since the word is often used to introduce various practical exhortations rather than mark the end of the letter. On the structure of the section, one commentator writes: "Paul's exhortations fall into two major units: verses 1-5 and 6-15. The first unit can be labeled 'General' since it deals in a wide-ranging way with various subjects: exhortation to pray for Paul and his fellow missionaries (vv. 1-2a), reason why such intercessory prayer is needed (v. 2b), word of encouragement about the Lord's work of strengthening and guarding the Thessalonians (v. 3), Paul's confidence in his Thessalonian readers (v. 4), and a prayer for what the Lord will do for them (v. 5). These disparate topics are joined together by a common function: to prepare the original readers to hear and heed the exhortations that come in the immediately following unit of verses 6-15" (Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, BECNT, 578).

In broader terms, verses 1-5 form a single paragraph in the NIV that is divided into two parts, verses 1-2 and 3-5, by "But" (v. 3). The first part contains Paul's prayer request; the second part contains his expression of confidence. His request is two-fold: 1) "that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored" (v. 1) and 2) "that we," that is, he, Silas, and Timothy (Ac 18: 1, 5), "may be delivered from wicked and evil people" (v. 2). Regarding the first request, the word translated "spread rapidly" (*trechō*), suggesting running (cf. "run swiftly" NKJV), and the word translated "be honored" (*doxazētai*), suggesting winning the prize, both point to Paul's use of a sports metaphor. One commentator writes: "The combination of 'run' and 'be honored' suggests that the apostles visualize the word as a runner who competes in the games and wins the prize, and so receives the honor that is due" (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNTC, 335). The gospel message is honored when it is received "just as" the Thessalonians received it—not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God" (1Th 2:13). "The importance of this parenthetical statement"—"just as it was with you"—"lies in its strong commendation of the Thessalonian readers and how this commendation sets them up to obey the commands that are coming in verses 6-15" (Weima, 587).

Regarding the second request, Paul is writing from Corinth (see *The NIV Study Bible*, note on 1Th 3:1-2; cf. Ac 18:1, 5), where he faces stiff opposition from unbe-

lieving Jews, who according to Luke, "opposed Paul and became abusive" (Ac 18:6). Unbelieving Jews dog his steps from Thessalonica to Berea (17:5-9, 13-15), and now unbelieving Jews in Corinth make "a united attack" on him and bring "him to the place of judgment" before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, charging that he "is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law" (18:12). As a result, Paul asks the Thessalonians to pray that he may be "delivered from such evil and wicked people," explaining that "not everyone has faith" (v. 2). Here is an example of *litotes*, a figure of speech involving a deliberate understating of a situation, often expressed negatively for effect. "Instead of saying positively 'a few have faith,' Paul makes the same point more powerfully by stating in a negative manner 'not all have faith' for another Pauline litotes, see Rom. 10:16: 'not all [the Israelites] accepted the gospel'" (Weima, 590).

The second part (vv. 3-5) is introduced by "But" indicating the *contrast* between the maliciousness of "wicked and evil people" who are *faithless* (v. 2) and the "the Lord" who is "faithful" to "strengthen and protect" them (v. 3). In the words of one commentator: "A double assurance, based on the Lord's faithfulness, is given the readers . . . Only here are the two verbs 'strengthen' and 'protect' joined in the New Testament. The first promises their inward stabilization, while the second assures that they will be protected from outward assault" (D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 363, 64). As in Matthew 6:13, "the evil" (*tou ponērou*) can be rendered "evil" or "the evil one" (depending on whether the noun it is interpreted as neuter or masculine), but it more likely should be rendered "the evil one" (cf. NIV, NET, NRSV, NASB, et al.). Because the Lord is faithful, Paul has confidence in the Thessalonians to continue doing the things he has commanded. His confidence is not in them *per se*, but in the Lord *concerning them*. Put differently, his "confidence is not in the reliability of human nature, but rather in the Lord who will work this willingness in them to obey voluntarily the commands laid upon them" (Hiebert, 365). Paul's expression of confidence is a rhetorical device intended to encourage them to live up to the confidence that the apostle has in them.

Finally, in his closing prayer-wish, he asks the Lord to direct his readers' to "God's love," which would result in them loving God and others more, and to "Christ's perseverance," which would result in them emulating the endurance he displayed in his incarnate life. Paul's prayers indicate *why* we should pray and *what* we should pray for.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *As for other matters* Cf. 1Th 4:1. “Paul uses the expression to introduce practical exhortations, but it does not promise that the letter is about to end. (See comments under 1 Thess. 4:1.) Neither does it imply that what still remains to be said is unimportant. It is quite clear that this chapter deals with one of the primary reasons for writing the letter” (D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 360).

vv. 1, 2 *pray* Cf. 2:16-17. “Here Paul’s command ‘Pray for us’ repeats exactly his words in the closing of the first letter (5:25). In both places he uses the present-tense imperative, thereby stressing the ongoing or continuous nature of their prayers on his behalf. The apostle expects the Thessalonians not merely to utter a quick prayer for him that will make them briefly feel good about themselves before they return to the concerns that preoccupy their own lives. Instead, Paul challenges, even commands, the converts in Thessalonica to regularly and repeatedly bring the issues of his life and his ministry to the throne of God in prayer” (Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, BECNT, 585).

v. 1 *of the Lord* Cf. “word of the Lord” (ESV); “Lord’s message” (NLT). As in 1 Thessalonians 1:8, where the identical phrase occurs, it is essentially synonymous with the ‘gospel of Christ’ (1 Thess. 3:2; 2 Thess. 1:8)” (Michael W. Holmes, *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Thessalonians*, 256). It is a message both from him and about him.

v. 1 *spread rapidly* Cf. “run swiftly” (NKJV). “The metaphor of running a race was common in Paul’s day, and he used it often in his letters (Rom. 9:16 KJV; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Gal. 2:2; 5:7; Phil. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:7). Indeed, although lacking the key verb ‘run,’ his previous letter to the Thessalonians makes a clear allusion to such athletic contests, where the victor receives a wreath (2:19: ‘For who is our . . . crown of boasting—Is it not, in fact, you?’)” (Weima, 586-87).

v. 1 *be honored* The second verb in the clause continues the athletic metaphor. “The Thessalonian believers are commanded to pray for Paul that the gospel message he proclaims may not only ‘run’ but also ‘be honored’ (*doxazētai*). As Green (2002:335) observes: ‘The combination of ‘run’ and ‘be honored’ suggests that the apostles visualize the word as a runner who competes in the games and wins the prize, and so receives the honor that is due.’ The gospel must not only run or compete in the public arena with other religions or world views; it must also win the competition and ‘be honored,’ that is, be accepted ‘not as the word of human beings but, as it truly is, the word of God’

(1 Thess. 2:13)” (Weima, 587).

v. 2 *wicked and evil people* “The two adjectives (*atopos*, ‘wicked’; cf. Acts 25:5; 28:6; *poneros*, ‘evil’; cf. 1 Thess. 5:22) are roughly synonymous and convey the idea of morally perverse people who maliciously obstruct the gospel, like the people in Thessalonica who had instigated a riot in order to hinder the preaching of the gospel (Acts 17:5)” (Holmes, 256).

v. 2 *for not everyone has faith* Cf. “for not everyone is a believer” (NLT). “The last phrase of 3:2—for ‘not everyone has faith’ (i.e., ‘not everyone believes’)—explains the hostility encountered by the missionaries, which in turn obstructs the progress of the gospel message. It also sets up 3:3 by offering a point of contrast (the maliciousness of the opponents verses the protection and care of the Lord)” (Holmes, 256).

v. 5 *May . . .* Another *wish-prayer* like others found in Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians (see 1Th 3:11, 12, 13; 2Th 2:11, 16-17; 3:1, 2, 5, 16).

v. 5 *God’s love* Lit., “the love of God” (ESV). “Strictly speaking, the phrase ‘love of God’ can indicate either ‘their love for God’ (taking ‘of God’ as an objective genitive) or ‘God’s love for them’ (‘of God’ as a subjective genitive). Both the immediate context (2:13, 16) and Pauline usage (e.g., Rom. 5:8) make it virtually certain that it is the latter, as the NIV correctly indicates” (Holmes, 258); cf. also, Ro 8:35.

v. 5 *Christ’s perseverance* Lit., “steadfastness of Christ” (ESV). “Similarly, the second phrase could be translated with the KJV as ‘the patient waiting for Christ’ (objective genitive; cf. 1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:4), but in view of the close parallelism between the second phrase and the first, ‘Christ’s [own] perseverance’ (subjective genitive; cf. NIV, NRSV) seems more likely” (Holmes, 258).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Pray *that* the gospel message will run swiftly across the world and be accepted for what it is, the word of God, *that* those who proclaim it will be delivered from wicked hands, and *that* the Lord will direct your heart into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Every year at camp our leaders fill out cards with kids' prayer requests. Some leaders let the kids do it themselves, and it's especially sweet to hear the heartbeat of what they are dealing with. We'll have requests for a sick grandmother or an aunt's divorce. Last year was especially rich with a deep and sincere request for a "horc" and "a kitty of my own and I want Ukraine to be safe." Me too, friends!! One of the most incredible disciplines we can foster in our kids is a love for prayer. God hears our prayers! What's more, He knows our hearts, even our words before they ever leave our lips. Teaching your child to pray at all times and in all circumstances is a foundation they will stand on their whole entire lives. Though it may seem fruitless when they are little, God is at work in your child. Last month I asked one of my kids about an important decision and they started their response with, "God said..." They had been talking to God in prayer and He answered them. Amen! If you don't know where to start, begin in the morning. Teach your child to hit their knees the moment they wake up thanking God for the day. Gather at the door before you leave for school and pray for God's wisdom and protection. Light a candle at dinner and prayerfully thank God for His provision. Ask your child to pray for specific needs for the family, to find that lost stuffie, heal their brother or increase the fruits of the Spirit. Pray and teach your kids to do likewise!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5.

1. What specifically did Paul ask the Thessalonians them to pray about?
2. What did Paul say about the Lord?
3. What was Paul confident about?

What Do You Think?

How important is prayer? Do you think God hears our prayers?

What Do You Do?

Make a prayer cube. Using a box, write different things or people you can pray about. At dinner time, roll the box like a die and pray together as a family for whatever it lands on.

CORE COMPETENCY: Prayer

I talk to God so I can know Him, ask Him for things and find out what He wants me to do.

MEMORY VERSE: Hebrews 12:28-29

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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