

Getting Our Bearings

In this series we are looking at the _____ of the Apostle Paul. So far, we have examined Paul's first two prayers on the Damascus Road during and after his dramatic conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ. We've also looked at the two prayers that are found in the _____ epistle, arguably the earliest of Paul's known writings. Today we turn to the First Thessalonian epistle, again one of Paul's earliest epistles, in which we find five distinct prayers. We will closely examine the _____ of these prayers found in I Thessalonians 1:2-3. But first, let's examine the background of the epistle so that we can better understand the _____.

Background

The distinction of this epistle is that it is _____ very early among the writings of the great missionary apostle Paul. Along with the Galatian epistle, this was Paul's earliest writing, and it is significant because of the _____ of the epistle, which is the _____ of the Saints and the _____ of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Little Bit Of History

The church in Thessalonica was founded during a very brief visit of the apostle Paul. Persecution made it essential for the apostle Paul to move on after less than a _____ in Thessalonica, but the core of believers he left behind became a strong and vital church. They had great faith that enabled them to persevere through severe and constant _____.

The City of Thessalonica

The city of Thessalonica was a large and prosperous _____. It was one of the most important cities in all Macedonia. Its early name "_____" was, of course, derived from the hot springs nearby. Thessalonica was inside of Mount Olympus, the original venue for the Olympic Games. The name "Thessalonica" was given to the city in honor of the half-sister of _____ the Great who bore the same name.

Main Issues

_____ main issues are dealt with throughout this epistle. First, Paul's apostolic _____ and personal integrity were being attacked by people who were trying to undermine the work of the great apostle.

The second issue concerned the _____ of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul expresses two major thoughts under this heading. In the first place, there was a sincere question of how one should _____ in the light of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of the Thessalonian believers were not living the pure, holy, and dedicated lives that their standing in Christ suggested. Other believers had _____ from working altogether and had taken up a position of ease and rest while awaiting the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another difficult spot for the Thessalonian believers involved members of the church who had _____ since the time that the apostle Paul had been with the church. Given their cultural aversion to any notion of the return to physical life after death, they began to question exactly what _____ to those who died in the faith. In I Thessalonians chapter four where Paul discusses in depth the _____ (HARPAZO ἀρπάζω or

“catching away of the saints”), he gives a clear and joyous answer to the question of exactly what happens to those who die in the flesh believing on the Lord. Here Paul emphatically states that the bodies of the dead in Christ would be caught up first and gloriously _____, reuniting with their spiritual nature which Christ brings with Him from heaven. Then the believers who are alive and remain shall also be caught up in the clouds of glory to be transformed forever more. And so, Paul teaches, we “shall ever be with the _____.”

The Prayer Itself

“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,” (1 Thessalonians 1:2–3, NKJV)

This is a beautiful prayer, and it unfolds around three groups of ideas: **THE APOSTLE’S** _____ (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) - the people who were doing the praying; **THE AIMS OF THE** _____ - the Thessalonian believers who were being prayed for; and **THE ADDRESSEES OF THE PRAYER** - the God to whom prayer was being made. Around these 3 groups (or _____) are a triad of ideas.

THE APOSTLE’S PARTY

“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, ³ remembering without ceasing...” 1 Thessalonians 1:2–3a. The activities and attitudes of the apostle Paul and his team (_____, Silvanus, and Timothy-see verse 1) were ones of giving thanks, praying, and perpetually remembering.

“Grace to you and peace” Paul offers the Greek greeting of _____ (charis χάρις “the gracious favor of God freely given on the merits of Christ’s sacrifice”) and the Hebrew greeting of _____ (eirene ειρήνη “a rendering of the Hebrew greeting “shalom”-a state of perfect wholeness between once warring parties to the merits of Christ’s death and resurrection”) in verse one. In fact, the emphasis is _____ on Paul or his associates but on the Lord Jesus Christ!

Paul, Silas, and Timothy were continually doing three things for the Thessalonian believers according to our text:

- ☞ **“We give _____ to God always for you all”**- They were always “giving thanks” (εὐχαριστέω a compound word from “eu” meaning “good” or “well” and “charis” χάρις here meaning “grace” or “thanks”-therefore “a thankfulness for the good or gracious”), and Paul further qualifies this thankful spirit by saying that the three of them had it “always” (πάντοτε pantote – “on every occasion”). The team’s contact with the Thessalonians was brief, but it was powerful, creating precious memories that came up continually. So precious ought to be the contact between God’s dear children that it leaves the sweet fragrance of heaven upon the heart _____. Is this how you feel about your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- ☞ **“Making mention of you in our prayers.”** The word “_____” (προσευχή proseuche) is a word that signifies coming before God with requests. This does not mean that the trio was doing nothing but praying, but that in every prayer, they _____ that God would bless, protect, and preserve the Thessalonian Christians.

📖 **They were remembering without ceasing.** “Remembering” here comes from the Greek word (μνημονεύω mnemoneuo) which literally means, “calling to _____.” It is from this word directly that we get our word “mnemonic” as in a mnemonic device which is something that helps you _____ something else. “Without ceasing” is (ἀδιαλείπτως adialeiptos) which is a compound word “a”=negative or not, “dia”=through, and “leiptos”=to leave; literally, something that will never go through you or _____ you. This refers to the kind of memories we have of a precious mother, grandmother, spouse, or child that are so deeply burned into our soul that we will never _____ them.

THE _____ OF THE PRAYER

“...for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, ³ remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope...” What exactly was it about the Thessalonian believers that so endeared them to Paul, Silas, and Timothy? There are three things:

📖 **Their “work of faith”:** The words, “work of _____” (ἔργον πίστις ergon pistis) refer to the outworking of genuine faith. We are not saved by works at all. All human merit is entirely off the table in salvation, but putting our whole confidence and trust in the finished work of Christ transforms us into new creatures who through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts produce the fruit of faith. We receive a perfect standing before God instantly and are judicially perfect in the eyes of a holy God through the merits of Christ alone. This is justification. But as we _____ with the Lord and cooperate with the sanctifying work of the Spirit, over time, people will note that our position in Christ practically begins to change our everyday walk and character. While this is not guaranteed and is dependent on our abiding in Christ in faith-rest, it produces the kind of work of faith which so thrilled the team that traveled with Paul.

📖 **Their “labor of love”:** The words, “labor of _____” (κόπος ἀγάπη koros agape “koros” means “hard work, exhausting labor under difficult circumstances,” and “agape” means “pure, sacrificial love”) means love shown under the most difficult circumstances. It is easy to talk of the love of God when all is well and the people upon whom we expend our love are kind and just to us, but these Thessalonian believers were living under extreme persecution, and they were very new Christians. Yet, they were living up to their position in Christ, showing the greatest love under the most _____ circumstances. What a challenge their testimony ought to be toward us.

📖 **Their “patience of hope”:** Let’s look at the phrase, “patience of _____.” Patience is the Greek word (ὑπομονή hupomone which means, “to remain under” and (ἐλπίς elpis which is translated, “hope.” Hope has changed its meaning in English over the years to something like, “a great desire” or “fervent wish.” However, biblical hope can be defined as “the well-founded, well-grounded expectation that God will live up to His _____.” Coupled with the word, “patience,” it refers to the ability of our confidence to bear up under the strain of persecution and turmoil because we are absolutely confident that the Lord Jesus Christ is returning. In the words of the old song, “It will be _____ it all.” Like the Thessalonian believers, we can endure anything knowing that on the other side of all our

toil and trouble, Christ awaits to make it all right again. Think of it this way, the _____ that can happen to us is to die and go to be with the Lord Who will say to us, "Well done!"

THE _____ OF THE PRAYER

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father," (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, NKJV) Bringing this study to a close, we note that the apostle, his team, and the Thessalonians acknowledged and pointed to God in His fullness by both the _____ and the _____ of this prayer. In this very early prayer of the Apostle Paul, the Trinity is clearly displayed, though the Holy Spirit as always demurely hides in verse five, but nevertheless permeates the essence of the prayer.

📖 **God is the proper Object of our thanks and prayers.** While we may see the character of God displayed in the testimony of our brothers and sisters in Christ, we must always keep in mind any changes come as a pure result of _____ and are thus items for which we should thank God in prayer. If we understand the Bible, it is not to our glory or credit, but simply because we have responded _____ to the grace of God. It is God Who has given us understanding.

📖 **God is the only Source of our hope.** We can endure "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" because we _____ God has a purpose, and we will soon be with Him and be _____ Him!

📖 **The prayer ends with this:** "...in the sight of God and our Father." The word that is translated, "in the sight" is (ἐμπροσθεν emprosthen) which means, "right out in _____ of." Now this is a frightening position if you are forced to stand in front of a class and perform from memory with a stern teacher watching, or in a recital with judges all around keeping score, or in a field of competition trying to remember a play to execute in the face of an aggressive adversary. But here the Scripture assures us that while we are standing in front of God, that God is our _____!

What a wonderful prayer! What a wonderful peace!