

Please take God's Word and turn with me to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1.

We are concluding this chapter with a look at verses 11-12.

Paul says, "To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Prayer is vital to the Christian.

It is vital for our encouragement and for our strength.

Prayer is what sustains our hope.

It also reflects our devotion to God.

When you consider prayer closely, we could say that it has a way of manifesting the true nature of our hearts.

Scripture is filled with teaching concerning prayer.

It not only tells us how and why but also when we are to pray.

Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to “pray without ceasing.”

In other words, it is to consume our lives.

Colossians 4:2 says, we are to “devote [ourselves] to prayer keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.”

So that means regardless of what we face in life we are to have an attitude of prayer.

Scripture teaches that we are to pray in times of affliction.

James 5:13 says, “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.

We are to pray in the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 6:18 says, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”

Not only are we to pray in the Holy Spirit but also in faith.

James says when we ask God for wisdom for trials, we are to “ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind” (Jas.1:6).

Though our prayers are to be continual, in the Spirit, and in faith, they are also to be with the heart.

Job 11:13 spoke of “[preparing] your heart, and [stretching] out your hands toward Him.”

The psalmist said he “[cried] out with [his] whole heart” (Ps.119:45).

We are to “lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven” (Lam.3:41).

If you took a moment to survey other ways in which we are to pray you would hear something like this:

We are to offer prayer:

In a forgiving spirit (Mat.6:12)

With the soul (Ps.42:4)

With understanding (Jn.4:22-24)

With confidence in God (Ps.56:9)

With submission to God (Lk.22:42)

With sincere lips (Ps.17:1)

With deliberation (Eccl.5:2)

With holiness (1 Tim.2:8)

With humility (Gen.18:27)

with Truth (Ps.145:18)

With a desire to be heard (Neh.1:6)

With a desire to be answered (Ps.27:7)

With boldness (Heb.4:16)

With earnestness (1 Thess.3:10)

With persistence (Gen.32:26)

Do you offer prayer in this way?

We may offer it once or twice but then give up because we haven't gotten an answer.

It is amazing how we neglect prayer, especially in light of the command to pray and the way we should offer up prayer.

Why should we pray?

Have you ever asked that question?

We pray not only because we are commanded to but also for other reasons.

There are three basic reasons why we are to pray.

First, we are commanded to. We have already covered that truth.

Second, it is for spiritual blessings.

Matthew 6:33 says, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

When we pray we are seeking God, His kingdom, His righteousness, His purposes.

But we also are praying...

Third, for our temporary needs.

There is a wonderful proverb found in chapter 30.

It begins at verse 7.

This is the prayer of Agur.

He says, “Two things I ask of You, do not refuse me before I die: keep deception and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion, that I not be full and deny You and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’”

Protect me and take care of me.

Good reasons to pray.

But I know we are can also pray for the wrong things.

We can spend more time focus on the temporal rather than the eternal.

And part of the eternal is praying for the lost.

In our time together this morning I want us to see how Paul prayed and how he prayed for the right things.

He loved this church.

He was concerned at one point with their existence.

But now as he writes, he is encouraged by their “perseverance and faith” (2 Thess.1:4).

And verses 11 and 12 gives us request of God for the Thessalonians.

He begins with...

THE MOTIVE OF HIS PRAYER (v.11a)

He says, “To this end also we pray for you always.”

If when the Lord Jesus returns He will give retribution to the lost and relief to the saved what kind of person should you be?

This is exactly what Peter said in 2 Peter 3:10-12:

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned

up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, *what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God,* because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!”

With all that is yet to happen when Jesus comes this should motivate you to holy living.

Paul says this is what motivated his prayer for them.

Next he we hear...

THE REQUESTS OF HIS PRAYER (v.11b-d)

He says he prayed always for them, first, “that our God will count you worthy of your calling,”

second, He would “fulfill every desire for goodness,” and third, He would fulfill “the work of faith with power.”

In other words, he requested three things: worthiness, fulfillment, and power.

First he requested...

Worthiness (v.11b)

“that our God will count you worthy of your calling.”

This encompasses the entire spectrum of Christian character.

Paul was essentially praying that God would enable them to honor the name of Jesus Christ.

We cannot honor Jesus unless God enables us.

For God must “count [us] worthy.”

The words “count...worthy” (axioo) can also be translated “make worthy,” but either is appropriate here because it is God who makes worthy those whom He counts worthy.

The word “calling” has reference to the irresistible call that infallibly results in salvation.

Theologians refer to this as the effectual or saving call of God.

This is not the same as the general call of salvation that goes out to everyone.

The effectual call is what Jesus referred to in John 6:44 when He said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.”

When God draws you to Himself, that is the effectual or saving call of salvation.

God takes sinners, worthy only of death (Rom. 1:32), and makes them worthy of His kingdom by imputing Christ's righteousness to them (2 Cor.5:21).

But Paul prayed that the Thessalonians would also prove worthy in practice through sanctification by the Holy Spirit.

As they become more like Jesus Christ, Christians become more deserving to bear His name" (John MacArthur, 2 Thessalonians, p. 257).

Just like Paul said of the Thessalonians in verse 4-5.

Because they were persevering in faith “in the midst of all [their] persecutions and afflictions,” they were “[considered] worthy of the kingdom of God.”

Paul not only requested worthiness but also...

Fulfillment (v.11c)

He says, “And fulfill every desire for goodness.”

Paul wanted God to *fulfill every* noble, righteous *desire* of their hearts.

The word “fulfill” (pleroo) could also be translated “complete,” or “accomplish.”

The word “desire” (eudokia) could also be translated “purpose,” or “choice.”

He wanted God to accomplish all their purposes and choices.

You say, “Wait a minute!”

“That doesn’t make sense!”

“Isn’t that selfish?”

Not when you finish the verse: “And fulfill every desire for *goodness*.”

In essence, Paul was asking God to bring about all their longing for goodness.

Those who make God’s agenda their own can exclaim confidently with David, “The Lord will accomplish what concerns me” (Ps.138:8).

His third request was for...

Power (v.11d)

“And the work of faith with power.”

The verb “fulfill” continues to this phrase.

Paul’s final request was that God would complete the work of faith He had begun in them *with power*.

This is a true pastor’s heart!

Paul knew the Thessalonians had genuine faith because it produced fruit but he wanted that work of faith to increase in power, so that there would be more righteous deeds!

This is what he also wanted for the Philippians--that they would be “filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God” (Phil.1:11).

That happens only through the filling of the Holy Spirit and the rich indwelling of the Word of God!

Why did Paul pray all of this?

He answers in verse 12.

“So that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The ultimate purpose of Paul’s prayer was that “the name of our Lord Jesus” would be “glorified” in their lives.

The idea of “name” means all that a person is.

To glorify the name of the Lord Jesus means to honor and exalt all He is.

And who is He?

God in flesh!

Our deepest desire should be to glorify the
Person of Jesus Christ!

And we do that by living a life that brings Him
glory and not shame.

When believers glorify Jesus, they in turn will
be glorified in Him.

This is an echo of 1 Samuel 2:30 where God
says, “Those who honor Me I will honor.”

Jesus said in John 12:26, “If anyone serves Me,
the Father will honor him.”

Jesus will honor those whose lives honor Him.

Paul closes this passage by reminding the Thessalonians that the ability to glorify Jesus comes only through “the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Like salvation itself, everything in the Christian life comes by “grace.”

CONCLUSION

As we close, ask yourself, “Do I glorify Jesus with how I live?”

Am I living a life worthy of His praise?

Are my desires for “goodness”?

John Owen gives us some good advice when he says, “He who prays as he ought, will endeavor to live as he prays.”

Let's pray together.

LIFE APPLICATION

How do you live worthy of your calling?

How do you glorify the name of Jesus?

Do you pray this way?