

WORD TOWARDS WHAT WE PRAY FOR

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

The idea that we should live in such a way that shows we are counted worthy of entering into heaven is present in v5 and v11. We are accounted worthy by the Lord because we have trusted in His Son, but we are to live in such a way that proves this. We are to be fit for heaven now. When we read in these two verses what Paul prays for the people, it is also a hint to us that this is how we are meant to live. In other words, this prayer shows us what we should be working towards.

1. Pray spiritual things for people.

Besides praying for people and their health conditions, we should pray for their spiritual progress. We should pray for the work of the Spirit within the soul. In these prayers, we pray that people would desire worthy things and do the will of God. These are not vague things but, when the Lord answers them, they have some very practical outworkings. They produce changes within which mean we will do more works and have a greater heart for the things of God.

These changes in the inner man will not register in some feeling. But they will show in us having an ongoing experience of hope and joy amidst trials. These are deep, not superficial things, that give us power and an inability to resist temptation better. The lack of prayer for self, or others, leaves us weak and not walking worthy of the Lord. There be so much preaching, so much Bible, but without these works within there will be sin and worldliness. Too many churches have been exposed, caring more for their reputations, than for the needs of children who are being subject to abuse within the church itself.

When we pray for people, that they may have spiritual blessings, we are learning to relate to each other as spiritual people. James 5:13-16 sets before us those good things in the spirit can lead to better outcomes in the body. Un-confessed sin is a drain on health and can lead to depression and fear. So we pray, as in Colossians 1:10-11, that we would increase in knowledge and be strengthened within. We take a big view of what we are, who God is and what God can do. He can do big things in small people. Then, that work within, will enable us to be more discerning, to recognize dangers more quickly, and to know what the Lord's will is.

2. Life goals.

God's grace is the ultimate source of all change within. We are shaped by it to obey God's will, but also resolve within to conform to that will. It is His power that is at work (v11) but we are still to will it into action. So we pray that people would will to do that which God wills them to do. We pray that they would have that resolve and determination. This is our life goal to reproduce, in ourselves, the life He loves and to make it the kind of life that we love too. We aim to walk worthy (Luke 21:36) and to be a mirror of His goodness to others.

If we walk in this way, it will give us the entrance to heaven that Peter speaks of (2 Peter 1:10-11). The things which will give us this entrance are listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7. These are immensely practical things we do. We learn here, what is the good pleasure of His will where we, in turn, are suffused with His goodness. This is not lived so as to catch the eye of others or to feel good about ourselves. We live like this because this is what God loves and wills us to do. It consists of acts of kindness, prayers, generosity, words of encouragement and self-control, among many things. It becomes so part of us to live like this that we cannot imagine ourselves doing any differently and would shudder to offend God. We love what God loves, and hate what God hates. We are unable to live with our conscience to live any differently.

Such a way of life is a work of faith, and it is made up of hard choices and decisions. It is not heroic and can seem very dreary and unrewarding at times. It is often to be seen in the people we are when no-one else is watching.

3. Ultimate ends.

The ultimate end is that we might glorify God, and that He would be glorified in us. It is finally fulfilled in heaven itself. Our presence there will glorify God as it will be a testimony to His love, power, wisdom and grace. It will magnify His name. We will be like a display of His handiwork. We will be living epistles, communicating to others the great work that the Lord has done in us. Angels will wonder (Ephesians 3:10). We will marvel at Christ's work in each other and be amazed at what He has done in each of us.

The prospect of us being glorified in Him points forward to us ruling and reigning with Him, sharing in His work with Him, in our glorified, resurrection bodies.