

June 18, 2017

“The Prayer Direction”

Focal Passage: 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 (NASB)

Cross References: Matthew 6:13; 28:18-20; Luke 22:31-32; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; Ephesians 6:16-20; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 5:24

Lesson Idea: We should pray that the Lord’s word and work spread rapidly and is glorified in us.

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

June 11 Job 35-37	June 12 Job 38-39
June 13 Job 40-42	June 14 Psalms 1-8
June 15 Psalms 9-16	June 16 Psalms 17-20
June 17 Psalms 21-25	June 18 Psalms 26-31

Background: This lesson consists of just five verses, but it contains some great truths about what God desires in and for His people. Paul had prayed for the Thessalonians several times in the two letters he wrote to them. Now he asks prayer for himself and his companions. This passage serves as a good model for the way we should pray for one another and for the Lord’s work.

NOTE: from David Guzik, *2 Thesslonians 3:*

Finally, brethren, pray for us: Paul constantly asked other Christians to pray for him (Romans 15:30, 2 Corinthians 1:11, Ephesians 6:18-19, Philippians 1:19, Colossians 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:25, and Philemon 1:22). Paul knew that the success of his ministry in some measure depended on the prayers of God’s people.

“You cannot tell how much God’s servants are helped by the prayers of his people. The strongest man in Israel will be the better for the prayers of the weakest saint in Zion.” (Spurgeon)

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; 2 and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. 4 We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

DISCUSSION:

- v 1. This chapter begins with the word “*Finally.*” As Paul concludes his second letter to the Thessalonians, why do you think he draws their mind to the subject of prayer?
- What was Paul’s first request? Why did he desire prayer for the spread of the Gospel instead of for himself? Are your prayers more about your physical problems or about spiritual needs like the spread of the Gospel? (see Ephesians 6:16-20)
- How could the word of the Lord “*spread rapidly and be glorified*” today? What is your role in that? (see Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)

NOTE: The word for “spread” rapidly could also be translated as “run rapidly” indicating God’s desire for the word to be taken to everyone as quickly as possible.

- Paul reminded the Thessalonians that the Word of the Lord spread rapidly among them. (see 1 Thessalonians 1:8) How does knowing how God saved you affect the way you share the Gospel with others?

NOTE: from Guzik:

That the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified: Paul’s great concern - what he first asked the Thessalonian Christians to pray for - was that God’s word be free to do its work among others, even as it had among the Thessalonians (just as it is with you).

Paul asked for prayer so that the word can run freely, without any hindrance. Paul’s prayer request makes us wonder how often the work of God’s word is hindered by our prayerlessness.

God has promised that His word would be free and perform its work: *It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it* (Isaiah 55:11). But as with many of God’s promises, we are expected to take this promise in faith, and ask prayer asking God to perform it for His glory.

- v 2. What was Paul’s second prayer request? How do “*perverse and evil*” people oppose those who have faith?
- v 3. Why does Paul remind them about the faithfulness of the Lord? How has He been faithful in

your life? (see 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:24)

- Why do we need to depend on the Lord to “strengthen and protect” us from the evil one? How does God do that? (see Matthew 6:13)

NOTE: from Guzik:

But the Lord is faithful: Even if not all men have faith, the Lord is faithful. This was the basis of Paul’s confidence in God’s ability to establish and *guard us from the evil one*.

God promised to keep Satan on a leash. He will not allow any temptation to become too great for us (1 Corinthians 10:13), and will not allow Satan to do whatever he wants with us (Luke 22:31-32).

- v 4. Why did Paul have confidence in the Lord about the Thessalonians? Would he have that same confidence about us? Why or why not?
- v 5. What was Paul’s desire for the Lord to do in the lives of the Thessalonians?
- What would your heart look like if it was always directed into the love of God? How does the steadfastness of Christ affect how you live?

NOTE: from Guzik:

And we have confidence in the Lord: Paul was also confident (in the Lord) regarding the Thessalonians themselves, that they would follow through and be obedient to God’s word (that you do and will do the things we command you). This shows that God’s work of establishing and guarding us is done, in part, through His appeal to our will in obeying His word.

God doesn’t just pour spiritual maturity and stability into us. He works it in us through our cooperation with His will.

Now may the Lord direct your hearts: Towards this end, Paul wisely prayed for both love and patience (endurance) for the Thessalonian Christians. These two qualities are essential for the kind of spiritual stability and strength the Thessalonians need.

APPLICATION:

- ✓ How can you help the word of the Lord spread rapidly and be glorified this week?
- ✓ With whom can you share a testimony of God’s faithfulness this week?
- ✓ What would a life that is “*directed into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ*” look like?

Lesson by Bro Stan