



2 Thessalonians 3:1-5: July 05, 2020

What Satan's Fears?

Pastor JD Farag

Good morning and welcome to our live stream and verse by verse study. We're currently in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3. We finished chapter 2 last week and today our text will be verses 1 through 5. For those that are here, I'll ask you to stand if you're able, if not that's all right. You can follow along as I read.

The Apostle Paul is writing to the church in Thessalonica and by the Holy Spirit says verse 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. "And [verse 2] pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people. For not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence [verse 4] in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance."

Let's pray if you would join with me? We'll ask God's blessing on our understanding. Thank you, Lord. Oh, Lord, thank you so much. We live in a day that serves as a reminder that we can easily be guilty of taking for granted what we just did in this public assembly of openly reading your word and assembling ourselves together as a body of believers in this your church.

Lord we don't want to take that for granted. We want to thank you so much for this freedom that is ours. We would ask, Lord, in our time together in your Word that you would bless this portion of Scripture that we have before us to our understanding. The application of it to our lives our speak into our lives. Lord, speak into our lives we pray, in Jesus name. Amen and amen. You can be seated.

Thank you I want to talk with you today about that which Satan fears the most, which is when we as Christians pray. The truth of the matter is, Satan is more afraid of us as praying Christians than we as Christians should ever be of him. Sadly, many a Christian has been deceived and believed that Satan is to be feared. When in fact he is a defeated foe.

This morning when I was preparing for today, the Lord just reminded me of Isaiah, and I just sort of last minute wanted to share with you chapter 14:12-16. I think you'll see why here in a moment. It's a description rather detailed, rather specific, as to how Lucifer was fallen and cast out of heaven. We're told, verse 12, "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning. How you are cut down to the ground you who weakened the nations. For You have said in your heart, 'I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the most high.'"

I-yi-yi-yi! I think there's like 8 "I's" in there, somebody might want to recount them. As one has so aptly noted the letter, I, is right smack in the middle of the word sin. The letter, I, is right smack in the middle of the word pride, and the letter, I, is right smack in the middle of the word and the name, Lucifer. That's interesting because that's the problem.

It's an "I-problem" if I can say it that way. It's this: I, myself, pride, exalting oneself, thinking more highly of oneself. So, verse 15, after all the I-yi-yi's, Isaiah writes, "Yet you [speaking of Lucifer] shall be brought down to Sheol to the lowest depths of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you..." Which means that there is coming a time when we're actually going to see what Satan actually looks like. Spoiler alert! He is not wearing red tights and has a pitchfork. He does not look like that.

Now this is what I want to draw your attention to because Isaiah goes on and says, and as they gaze at you, they're going to consider you and here's what we're going to say, "Is this the man who made



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the earth tremble? Who shook the kingdoms?" No way! The "no way" is not in there, I added that. I think you get the point of that. In other words, when we see Satan? We are going to be shocked.

This goes both ways by the way. When we see Jesus, we're going to be shocked too. By the way, again, spoiler alert! He doesn't have long hair, blue eyes, and all wimpy. The pictures, the depictions of what Jesus looked like... You are in for a very, how do I say this as lovingly as I can? You're going to be shocked. ... You understand, he's Jewish. Just so you know, he's Middle Eastern. He probably looks a lot more like me than... You could have probably gone the rest of your life without that image, right?

What's my point? Maybe you're asking do you even have a point? Yes, I do have a point. Bear with me; hang in there with me. Okay? We do err greatly when we paint this picture of Satan on the canvas of our minds as this fearful foe. He's more afraid of us than we should ever be of him.

Do you know what He's most afraid of? I mean certainly, he doesn't like it when a Christian goes to church. He really doesn't like it when a Christian gets into the Word. But I'm going to tell you when a Christian prays? He hates that the most. Why? Because he knows that is the deciding factor.

When a Christian prays, that's it. He is a defeated foe and this is the thing he hates the most. This is why it is. By the way. Have you ever noticed when you set aside some time to pray? All hell literally breaks loose. For those of you have young children at home, all of a sudden out of nowhere, they start fighting like they've never fought before. The phone rings, something happens, this happens.

Satan knows that as soon as you pray, it's game over for him. He doesn't want you to know that. He wants you to think that you are to fear him. No way! No way. I know I've shared this in the past. There was a time in my life actually recently as recent as last year where I was really going through a very difficult trial. I just remember the Lord impressing upon my heart that this was a spiritual battle that I was in.

This was intense spiritual warfare. So, I prayed out loud and I hope you don't think differently of me when I share this, but I actually prayed out loud, Satan, you are a defeated foe. I resist you! You have to flee! Out with you! And he left. I'm like, ho, that worked! And I quoted scripture because that's what Jesus did when he was attacked. He quoted out of Deuteronomy by the way, and that's how the victory was won.

We should never fear the enemy; he fears us. We have been given the power and it comes via a vis this thing we call prayer, and it's the one thing that the Christian does not avail themselves of and in so doing it is to their own peril. Oh, I think of that hymn of old, that classic timeless hymn, what a friend we have in Jesus; all of our needs we carry to him in prayer. But there's that one verse that says, oh what needless pain we suffer all because we don't carry everything to him in prayer.

That's what I want to talk about today. In the text that we have before us today, the Apostle Paul is writing about prayer, really the power of prayer. In so doing he provides us with some really important details that could be easily missed at first read. Specifically, as it relates to prayer being the deciding factor concerning every area of our lives as Christians in this fallen world.

Even more specifically as it relates to prayer changing the outcome of everything, when we as Christians pray about everything. One of the things I'm learning in my own prayer life is that there are situations that would have turned out very differently had I but prayed. Conversely, I've had situations in my life that clearly had a very different outcome because I prayed.



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I remember one night before a prayer meeting I was just sharing some thoughts before we started the prayer meeting. You know the enemy is so predictable. It's always a Saturday night before a Sunday morning. It's always a Tuesday before Tuesday night prayer. It's always a Thursday before the Thursday night Bible study. I mean I could just set my watch. Oh, you're right on time; there you are.

But there was a situation on this particular Tuesday and I went immediately to prayer and I prayed in such a fashion. You know when you pray and sometimes it's just like, man, that was effectual! Something happened, I mean, it's just that sense. It is almost like the Holy Spirit is bearing witness with your spirit. This is good between me and the Holy Spirit; God heard that prayer. There was just this overwhelming sense of peace, it was like God was saying, I got this. Watch me now.

Now this was in the morning; I go into this intense spiritual warfare and prayer, and by the afternoon, the situation was resolved in such a way that it was only God could do it. As only he can and he did it in such a way that it was unmistakably him. You know how it is that sometimes something will happen and you know it's the Lord, because there's no other explanation. Well, that's what it was like.

Here's what the Lord ministered to me that day before the prayer meeting that night, and I shared it, was that that situation could have turned out very differently if I didn't pray. That sends chills up and down my spine because what that means is prayer has the propensity to change every situation in your life, and sometimes that situation can change instantly.

What I want to do is share with you three keys, for lack of a better way of saying it: Three ways to pray. I hate it when the world hijacks, I know Arabs shouldn't use the word hijack, but the world hijacks biblical truths and principles. My pet peeve is the "secret to success". The world has totally stolen that from us, and marred it, and profaned it, and made it common and secular. So, I always sort of preface it that way when I say this was Paul's secret to success.

This is the secret to success when it comes to prayer, and you see this 1st one on the screen and it's a biggie. It's humility. In fact, it starts here. You know what's striking to me? Is that Paul, this is the Apostle Paul we're talking about. He's humbling himself and asking his brothers and sisters to pray for him. That's humility. Hey, if I know the Apostle Paul? I'm going to him saying, Paul, dude, you're connected. Will you pray for me?

No, this is the other way around. Paul is humbling himself and admitting, hey, I need prayer. Do you know what is really sad to me? Is that many a Christian does not feel safe going to a brother and sister in Christ and just asking for prayer. They go like, where's your faith? I thought you were more spiritually mature than that. It is almost like this admission of weakness and sadly, it's the opposite that's true.

In fact, Paul would say that he would boast in his weakness because when he's weak that's when he's strong. The way up is the way down. What's interesting is replete throughout his epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, the churches in Colossae, Paul asked them to pray for him. The reason I believe that he did is because he knew well that the prayers of God's people had the power to impact the effectiveness of his ministry in spreading the gospel.

If you think about it, just the very act of prayer is an acknowledgment of one's own humility and need. The ones God can't help are the ones who don't think they need help. When I was a new believer, I was sharing with my cousin who was not a believer that I was just praying and asking God for help and asking him to pray. He says to me, well, you know God helps those who help themselves.



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Now I hadn't read the Bible yet and I'm looking for that verse. I was thinking maybe it's next to that other verse, you know cleanliness is next to godliness. I didn't find it because it's not there. It might be in "1st Fleshalonians" but it's not in here. The reason it's not is because the opposite is true.

God helps those who can't help themselves. But see we're so full of pride, so full of ourselves, you wouldn't catch me dead admitting, hey I need help. You need help? Yeah. You wimp. I know. It's an admission of need and it's an act of faith. In Proverbs, we just got done finishing the book of Proverbs, and throughout the book of Proverbs, one proverb after another.

What comes from and because of humility? With humility comes wisdom. You need wisdom? It comes by way of humility. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and he will lift you up. I think about some of the most miraculous supernatural things that God has done in my life, and without exception, it has always come because I humbled myself, and I prayed and I asked God to grant me what I was asking for.

I mean throughout all of my Christian life, every grand and glorious thing that God has done for me has come because of prayer. Prayer, just simply praying. By the way, can we just make sure that we understand that prayer is not complicated. This is another tactic of the enemy, by the way. He tries to complicate prayer and it gets so complicated that we don't pray.

Many years ago, I prayed, God I want to be a man of prayer, make me a man of prayer So I went out and I bought books on prayer. One book, voluminous, E.M. Bounds, oh, my goodness. Great book, make no mistake about it; this thick. I'm going to read this book on prayer. I started reading it. The Lord just said, why don't you just pray? Do you know the time it would take you to read this book on prayer? You could be in prayer. So, I put it back on the shelf and I prayed.

Prayer is just talking to the Lord. It's just talking to God. Do you know when Paul talks about praying continually? When you say, hey, let's pray. What's the first thing that happens? Our heads go down, our eyes close, our hands probably fold. Do you know that in the Old Testament when you see or read where somebody prayed? It's more like this. Did you know that?

You're crying out to God. Whether on your knees, on your face? It really doesn't matter so much the posture of your body, as it does the posture of your heart before God. Humbling yourself and just crying out to God. God, oh I need thee; oh, Lord, I need thee. It's music to God's ears.

The 2nd one is specificity and it's in verses 2 and 3. Notice that Paul in asking them to pray for him does so with specificity. It's not just a generic, sort of open-ended, hey pray for me? Yeah, I'll pray for you. I mean, come on, ow often do we do that? Hey, I'll pray for you. Really? Or how about this one?

I always know it's going to be not good when somebody says, you know, I prayed about this before I sent this email. Oh, no. My question is, okay, you prayed about it, what was God's response? Oh, did you just stick around for that? Because prayer is not a monologue; it's a dialogue. This conversation; it's communicating with the Lord and the Lord communicates back. Oh yeah, he does. He talks back through his Word chiefly.

But Paul is very specific. This is important because when God answers the prayer, you're going to know that he answered the prayer by virtue of the specificity of the prayer. If it's a generic prayer it's going to be kind of like a generic answer. Lord, I just pray that you'll do this, bless them, bless this, and then that's it. Then God does it and you are like, he did? Well, yeah, you asked him. It was according to his will. He answered the prayer. Oh, really? Well, if there's specificity and God answers it specifically then there's no ambiguity, right?



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What is the specific prayer request that Paul humbles himself and asks them to pray for? He says, "Pray that we are delivered from people who are evil and wicked." That's a good prayer. Obviously, Paul was on the receiving end of a lot of attacks, and oh, my goodness, he was. He's asking them to pray that he's delivered from these evil and wicked people, it's almost like in our day and age.

We again sadly, you ask someone for prayer and you're that specific? Sometimes the response is something along the lines of "buck-up buttercup" and "pull yourself up by bootstraps". What's the matter with you? No, I need prayer. I need prayer.

I would venture to say and please don't look at the person sitting next to you when I say this. But there are people in this beautiful loving amazing church that are going through stuff that you can't even begin to imagine. They would love nothing more than to be able to say to you, hey, I'm really struggling. I need prayer. I need prayer for this specific issue. Would you pray for me?

In verse 3, we see the heart of the Apostle Paul. As we've gotten to know him and our study through the New Testament it's becoming abundantly clear that Paul was such a loving man. I don't know what your picture of the Apostle Paul is. Fearless, yes, but loving. Oh, he was such a loving man and he loved these Christians so much. Even in his asking them to pray for him he's encouraging them as well.

Here's what I'm thinking. They knew Paul was always praying for them, and we even see it throughout this letter to the church in Thessalonica as well as all of his letters. I mean if you were to ask anybody in Colossae, or Philippi, or Thessalonica, or any of these places, what's Paul like? Oh, my goodness. He's a man of prayer; he is so loving. He is so compassionate; he is so caring. He prays for us all the time. That would have been their answer.

It's this last one that I want to spend the remainder of our time on, and I think you'll see why here in a moment. It's in verses 4 and 5 and its persistency. I don't know if it's possible to overstate the importance of persistency in prayer. Here Paul confidently prays for them. He asked for prayer from them but he also prays for them specifically, that the Lord will direct them to continue and persevere in God's love for them.

The inference being, the implication being, that this was an issue for them. This was a struggle for them: The perseverance, the endurance, the confidence. Paul knew what they needed prayer for. This is an area that I want you guys to know, I know, that you need prayer, because you need to continue and persevere and persistently pray. Actually, confidently and persistently praying is the key to answered prayer and I'll explain how I get there.

It's praying confidently. Really the confidence in prayer is the fuel in the tank of the persistence in prayer. Maybe better said, I'm not going to continue praying if I don't have any confidence that that prayer is going to get answered. Whereas if I do have confidence and faith and trust and believe that God will answer my prayer if I will but persist, then I'll persist.

I hope that doesn't sound like a play on words but maybe I can say it this way. Again, I know Arabs shouldn't use airplane analogies but confidently and persistently are the two wings on the airplane of prayer. That's what makes it fly. You need both. It's that confidence. I think about David, I would have lost heart. But I remained confident knowing, Psalm 27:13 and 14, that I will see the answer to my prayer, the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Just wait; just wait you'll see. I'm still confident. I haven't lost confidence and I'm going to continue to persist and persevere and endure.



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By the way, prayer might be simple but that isn't mean that it's easy. Simple is not synonymous with easy. Maybe I need to explain that a little bit more and expound on that. Just because something is simple doesn't mean that it's easy. Prayer is hard work; laboring in prayer. Paul, in fact, to the Thessalonians, we saw this in his first epistle, he actually describes his love for them and his prayer for them like a woman travailing in labor. That's how much he loved them. He labored in prayer for them.

Now listen, I was present at the birth of all four of our children, and I want you to know it was very painful for my wife. I have a profound respect and admiration and adoration for my wife. For women who have given birth, oh my goodness. My wife did not, at all of our births except for Noel because of her Trisomy 18, did not have an epidural. It was natural and I mean she felt everything.

And I was there. She was holding my hand one time and cut off the blood circulation. They started turning white, and I was looking at her trying to tell her. I have a video to prove it too, by the way, we videotaped all of the births. I mean that labor room when that woman is in labor giving birth.

That's what Paul is comparing his love for them and his prayer for them too. I have to confess that as the pastor of this loving church, and God knows I love you but that convicts me. I mean I don't know if I can say that. That's love. Now, think about this. Aren't the ones that we pray for the most, the ones that we love the most? Right? Goes hand in hand.

Let's talk about this persistency in the context of this parable that Jesus taught in Luke 18. We affectionately refer to it as the parable of the persistent widow. This is actually, an often misunderstood parable. You understand the point of a parable is to parallel, para, come alongside, a comparison. So that's what this parable is and Jesus taught in parables.

In verse 1 of Luke 18, we're told then Jesus told his disciples a parable, and here is the point of that parable: To show them that they should always pray and never give up. That's the point of the parable; now, here's the parable.

He said, "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought." Well, nice guy. "And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' For some time, he refused..." We're not told how long but it sounds like some time went by. It sounds like she bugged him every day, all day, every night, all night until finally he just couldn't take it anymore.

Jesus says finally, he says to himself, okay already. He didn't say it like that but... "Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice. So that she won't eventually come and attack me." In other words, just here, leave me alone."

The Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says, will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you he will see that they get justice and quickly. However [and this is interesting] when the Son of Man comes will he find faith on the earth?'

The reason that's interesting to me is because we know that prayer is an expression, a demonstration of faith. I mean come on, let's be honest. If we didn't have faith, we wouldn't pray. What would be the point? Just the very fact that you would pray means you have faith, right? So what Jesus is saying here is, you have not because you ask not, and the reason you ask not is because you have faith not. And James would echo this.



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But what's striking to me is that Jesus would teach a parable comparing God to this unjust judge and for good reason. Because the idea here is that if the unjust judge because of the tenacity and the persistence of this widow who will not leave him alone will grant the justice, answer the prayer, how much more will your heavenly Father, who is just, answer your prayer? You know when Jesus says the one who asks receives, the one who seeks finds, the one who knocks the door will be opened unto them?

Did you know that in the original language it carries the idea of ask, keep on asking? Seek, keep on seeking; don't stop. Knock, keep on knocking; don't stop. Don't give up! Yeah, but Pastor, I've been praying for them for years. Okay, are you going to stop now? Does it have an expiration date on it? You're just going to give up? Yeah, God is not answering my prayer. Oh, that's where you're wrong.

God always answers your prayer. You just may not like the answer that he has for your prayer. See, he's either going to answer it in one of three ways. He's either going to say yes. I always love the yes'. I'm like, yes, thank you, Lord. Or no. Why not? Or thirdly, not yet. Wait.

I think about Isaiah 30: 18, where it says that the Lord will wait to be gracious unto you. I like how one quipped, well said, said it best this way: When the request in prayer is wrong? God says, no. When you're wrong? God says, grow. When the timing is wrong? God says, slow. But when the request is right, and you're right, and the timing is right? God says, go.

You know sometimes God will not answer the prayer at the time that you want him to because that would not be the best for you. One of the things that has changed my prayer life in a profound way is this simple truth. That God will always answer my prayers exactly the same way I would answer my own prayers if I knew what he knew. Sometimes in my way of thinking, because I know God has a sense of humor.

I picture God in heaven when I pray and I'm praying specifically, and I'm humbling myself, and persistently and with specificity, and humility, and I'm praying I'm crying out to God. It's like God is saying, you don't want me to answer that prayer because if I answered that prayer... I heard one say it this way, many years ago, it always stuck with me. I always thank God for answered prayer, but sometimes I thank God more for the prayers that he didn't answer. Because you look back in retrospect...

I keep a prayer list; I've done this for many years. It is very healthy for me to go back over some of those prayers. So, I have the date that I prayed it, the prayer, the specific prayer. It's an excel, in a spreadsheet. I know they have clinical terms for this but it's all organized. So anyway, enough of my problems. So, I have the date, the prayer, the date that it was answered, and how it was answered. I've been doing this for years.

I also have a prayer journal. Every so often I'll go back over that prayer list. We're talking 10 years ago and I'm reading these prayer requests First of all I find myself apologizing, God, I'm so sorry I prayed for that. What was I thinking? You weren't. No wonder you didn't answer. Thank you for not answering that prayer that I prayed that day that way, because if you would have answered that prayer that day that way it would have been catastrophic.

Sometimes we pray and we're very specific and it's like God saying, that's it? That's all? In other words, we pray too low, too small. Here's God, and never imagine there is a kind of disgust or impatience or disdain on God's part. I think it's just such a compassionate, loving-kindness, and patience, oh my goodness. When we pray and he's just like, man, I am God. Why are you praying so



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little, when your God is so big? And why did you stop, by the way? Why did you give up? Why did you toss in the towel so quickly? Oh, if you would have but persisted in prayer.

It's kind of interesting because just the persisting and enduring in prayer because it is hard work. You're laboring in prayer. It changes you. We say prayer changes things; I've heard it said this way. Prayer changes the pray-er, changes the pray-er, when you persist, and never give up.

Let me close this way. I don't know what it is for you; the Lord does. I want to encourage you, whatever it is. I mean this, don't take this the wrong way. I don't care, I mean I care, but I don't care how hard it seems. How impossible it is. How I mean big the problem may seem. I don't care.

If you will but pray and persist in prayer, God will answer your prayer no matter what it is. He can't not. I know that's not proper English. It's inconsistent with who he is. Think of it as an earthly parent, fallen, imperfect, sinful. Your child comes to you, cries out to you. Are you not going to respond? How much more your heavenly Father when you cry out to him? He will hearken unto the voice of your cry. That's just who he is and that's how good he is.

When our boys were young, this is many years ago now. This is when the whole, "let them cry it out thing", was popular. Do you know what I'm talking about? Let them cry it out. Don't pick him up every time. Because then they're going to grow up that way and you're going to mess him up bad.

My wife and I were talking the other day, we really messed up, even with our daughter who's 13 now. I mean we made a couple of corrections but still, man. I asked her, I said, do you think we're good parents? She said, no. No, we're not good parents. We read all the books on parenting before we had children, and then once we had our firstborn son? Man, those things went in the rubbish.

But we read the books about, let them cry it out. Don't pick them up! They're crying, don't pick them up. Let them cry; let them cry it out. So, we tried that. We'd go into our room and I mean it was like well, what? I'm supposed to sleep through this? I mean that is my child crying. I'm going to let him cry it out? God doesn't let me cry it out. I mean I think I lasted, I want to say about, I might have made a minute. I think was more like 45-50 seconds. Here nurse him. Come on, you did the same thing, guys. Make him stop; here nurse him.

I say that to say this lastly. Do you know how the sound of your child crying, just I mean everything within you is going crazy? How much more is that true with our heavenly father? He's going to respond. Whatever it is never, never, never, give up.

Especially for those of you online in particular that wayward daughter, that prodigal son, never stop praying for them. I know sometimes it seems like the harder you pray, the worse they get. Never give up. Never give up. Never Stop. Persist in prayer.

Why don't you all stand and we'll pray. Thank Lord. Lord, I always feel so inadequate when it comes to teaching on prayer. This is inexhaustible, unfathomable, incomprehensible.

Lord, thank you for prayer. Thank you that we can come to you any time, about anything, anywhere. Thank you that when we cry out to you, you hearken unto the voice of our cry.

Thank you that the enemy is a defeated foe.

Lord, I pray that we would avail ourselves of prayer in all of its power. In Jesus name. Amen.