

1/30/00

**The Only True Help Is Prayer**  
**2Thess. 3:1-2**

The power of prayer is clearly revealed throughout the Scriptures yet for some reason, every generation is consistent in neglecting prayer and at time not believing it's benefits, altogether by not praying.

One day God was about to destroy Israel and Moses interceded for Israel.

“And now, I pray, let the power of my LORD be great, just as You have spoken, saying, The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.” Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to your word;” Nun. 14:17-20

The apostle to the Gentiles has prayed for the Thessalonians, whom God has chosen for salvation, that He might strengthened them and continue to work in them and through them. 2:16-17

Paul knowing that he is no different as those he has just finished praying for, he now asks that the Thessalonians pray for them.

Paul has prayed for them three before and he is going to pray for them twice more, before he signs the letter with his own hand. 1:3, 11, 2:16-17, 3:5, 16

Paul moves from the doctrinal section to the practical section. 2:1-17, 3:1-15

\* This doesn't imply that there is no doctrine being taught but that the central focus of the section deals with the practical application to their local or life situation.

We want to look at Paul's prayer request for the preaching of the gospel. 3:1-2

- I. Paul requested prayer for the human instruments. vs. 1a-c
- II. Paul requested prayer for the word to be effective. vs. 1d-e
- III. Paul requested prayer for protection from evil men. vs. 2

**I. Paul requested prayer for the human instruments. vs. 1a-c**

- A. The request for prayer is prefaced by the word “finally”. vs. 1a

1. The apostle is beginning to wind down his letter.
    - a. He has dealt with the crucial issues the “Day of the Lord”.
    - b. He has reminded them of all he told them about the man of lawlessness.
    - c. He has given thanks for their salvation and exhorted them to hold fast to the truth.
  2. The word is used by Paul in two ways.
    - a. He uses it as a transition to introduce practical exhortation without implying the letter is coming to a close. Phil. 3:1, 1Thess. 4:1  
\* It could be translated moreover, furthermore or henceforth.
    - b. He uses it to indicate the conclusion of the letter. 2Cor. 13:11, Eph. 6:10, Phil. 4:8, 2Thess. 3:1  
\* It could be translated for the remainder, the rest or at last.
- B.** The request for prayer is directed to his spiritual children, while relating himself as their equal before God,  
\* “Brethren”. vs. 1b
1. The word brethren “adelphos” as we have noted before means from the same womb.
    - a. Those who belonged to the same family of God.

- b. They would be the best ones to intercede for Paul and his companions knowing their circumstances.
    - c. Nineteen times in the first letter and nine times in the second.
  2. The apostle portrays himself as a mere man.
    - a. Paul was teaching them that our spiritual birth should produce humility in us, rather than self-exaltation.
    - b. Paul was teaching them that no one is above or beyond the need of prayer.
    - c. Paul was teaching them that the ones who know you, should be the ones you should ask to pray for you.
- C.** The request for prayer is for his fellow servant not just for himself.  
\* “Pray for us”. vs. 1c
1. The word for prayer “proskomai” means to supplicate, worship and is always used of God for prayer in general. Rom. 8:26, Eph. 6:18, 2 Cor., Phil 1:9,
    - a. The Thessalonians now had the right to go before the throne of grace and plead on their own behalf or others. Heb. 4:14-16
    - b. The Thessalonians had been the very recipients of the apostle’s prayers, while in his absence.

- c. The present tense calls for continued prayer on their behalf.
- 2. The apostle Paul was doing two things by requesting prayer from the Thessalonians.
  - a. Paul was teaching them the proper attitude and perspective of a true servant to help others in their spiritual needs.
  - b. Paul was teaching them that no one member in the body of the church can do without the help of the other members of the body or think themselves to be more important.
  - c. Paul, Silas and Timothy all needed help from heaven through the intercessory prayers of the saints.

### **Illustration**

One day Spurgeon was asked the secret of his ministry. Without saying a word he took the man to a small room where people were praying for the word as it was being preached.

\* Our prayer room is open for individuals to pray during the service, that the word of God be effective in the heart of the hearer, we invite you to come to one of the three services and pray in the other!

### **Application**

1. We need to pray always showing God our awareness that we cannot do His work in the energies of the flesh and everyone else who is going to be used of God.
  - \* Paul tells the Ephesians, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. Eph. 6:18
2. We need to pray continuously especially after God uses us and others, lest we forget who did it.
  - \* *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.* Prov. 16:18
3. We need to pray that we not get discouraged in our service, thinking that God will not avenge His servants.
  - \* “Then Jesus spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. "Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, `Get justice for me from my adversary....Shall God not avenge His elect who cry out day and night to him, though He bears long with them?" Lk. 18:1-3

***Paul requested prayer for the human instruments!***

### **II. Paul requested prayer for the word to be effective.**

- \* “That the word of the Lord may run swift and be glorified, just as it is with you.” vs. 1d-e

- A.** The petition was that the word of God have victory in men's hearts. vs. 1d
1. The method was by “The Word of the Lord”, speaking of the gospel. 1Thess. 1:8, 4:15
    - a. Also called the Word of God. 2Thess. 2:13
    - b. Also called the word of truth. Col. 1:5
  2. The manner was for it to run swift.
    - a. The phrase run swift “treko” means to make rapid progress, being unhindered.
    - b. Paul very possibly was combining the Old Testament imagery and the New Testament runner in the stadium. Ps. 147:15, Rom. 9:16, 1Cor. 9:24, Gal. 2:2, Phil. 2:16, 2 Tim. 4:7, Heb. 12:1
      - 1) Personifying the word of God or the gospel as running through the land having victory in the hearts of lost man.
      - 2) The verb is in the present tense, indicating continuous progress and winning their hearts.
- B.** The petition was that the word of God receive it proper recognition.  
\* “Be glorified”. vs. 1d

1. The outcome of the word of God running swiftly in the hearts of men, is that it would be glorified.
  - a. The word glorified “doxazo” means exalted with the idea of being honored as the triumphal winner by virtue of it’s inherent quality.
    - 1) Acknowledging that the word of God was God’s revelation not from man’s.
    - 2) Acknowledging that it could do what it promised.
    - 3) Acknowledging the love of God by responding in gratitude.
    - 4) Acknowledging that one day all will bow their knee to Christ to be judged, if they do not bow their knee now to be saved.
  - b. All three verbs pray, run and glorified are in the present, they are to pray continuously for effectiveness of the gospel. Acts 13:48-49
    - 1) Being welcomed into the heart, to convict man of his sins and transgressions.
    - 2) Being regenerated and to trust it for salvation and ongoing transformation..
    - 3) Being a witness of what God has done by changing their lives.

2. The example of the word being glorified is the Thessalonians, “just as it is with you.” vs. 1e
- a. The Thessalonians were the pattern of welcoming the gospel in their hearts wholeheartedly, walking worthy of the Kingdom and glory, so Paul wanted to see it happen in others. 1Thess. 2:12
  - b. The Thessalonians were the productive example which Paul wanted to see repeated in others.
  - c. The Thessalonians had the contagious disease.
    - 1) The word ran swiftly, unhindered and triumphed over their lives of sin, convicting them, saved them and turned them around.
      - a) The effectiveness of the gospel into Europe was by God’s direction through prayer and obedience of the man Paul. Acts 16:11-17:9
      - b) They welcomed the word of God as divine revelation not man’s speculations. 1Thess. 2:13-14
    - 2) God through the prophet Isaiah said, “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it

shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” Is. 55:11

- a) The word of God judges a person of rebellion against God, for rejecting the word.
- b) The word of God judges the a person’s sins by repenting before God by receiving the word.

### Illustration

Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands *became* heavy; so they took a stone and put *it* under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.. Ex. 17:8-13

### Application

1. Our prayers should be that the word of the gospel be preached clearly, uncompromising and to all.

- a. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Rom. 3:23
  - b. For all are under God's wrath for their ongoing rebellion against God. Jn. 3:36
  - c. For all are able to come to God, if they believe the message of the gospel and drink of the water of life freely. Rev. 20:17
2. Our prayers should be consistent and faithful for those who are lost. 1Thess. 5:17
- a. Our family members.
  - b. Our friends.
  - c. Our fellow workers.
  - d. Our fellow leaders.
3. Our prayers should not cease they are saved but that the word be honored in their lives.
- a. By growing as spiritual babes as they feed on the unadulterated word of God, unto their full stature in Christ. 1Pet. 2:2, Eph. 4:10-16
  - b. By communicating to others what God has done for us as He opens the doors; family first, friends next and others after that, even as Jesus sent the Demoniac. Mk. 5:19
  - c. By trusting the word to do what it says it can do as I die to self, walk in the Spirit and yield to God's agape love. Rom. 6:6, 11, Gal. 5:16-17, 22

*Paul requested prayer for the word to be effective!*

### III. Paul requested prayer for protection from evil men. vs. 2

\* "That we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith."

- A. Paul recognized their need of God's preservation as they preached the gospel.
- \* "That we may be delivered." vs. 2a
1. The verb delivered "ruomai" means to rescue.
    - a. The context pin points the rescue for the purpose of continuing the work of the gospel.
    - b. The word is used in the model prayer taught by Jesus, "deliver us from evil." Matt. 6:13
    - c. The word is used by Paul of personal deliverance from dangerous situations. Rom. 15:31, 2Cor. 1:10, 2Tim. 4:16-18, 2Tim. 3:11
      - \* Paul tells Timothy, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." 2Tim. 3:12
    - d. The word is used of eschatological deliverance. 1Thess. 1:10
  2. The verb deliver also has the definite article and the use of the aorist suggesting one particular act of deliverance.

- a. Paul was at Corinth with great opposition and the Lord Jesus appeared to him told him to stop being afraid, but to speak boldly and not keep silent, for He was with him and no one would harm him, for Jesus had many people in the city. Acts 18:9-11
- b. Then there is one account recorded when Paul was brought before Gallio the procuncilior of Achaia by the Jews and God delivered him. Acts 18:12-17
- c. Paul prayed that he be delivered from those in Judea who did not believe as he took the gift to the poor saints in Jerusalem. Rom. 15:31

**B.** Paul identified the enemies of the gospel.

\* "From unreasonable and wicked men." vs. 2a

- 1. They are said to be unreasonable in conduct.
  - a. The word unreasonable "atopos" means that which is out of place, improper or perverse.
  - b. The word describes men capable of outrageous and harmful acts against others.
  - c. The word appears three times in the New Testament.

- 1) It is used by the thief on the cross of Jesus, "This man has done nothing amiss." (KJV) Lk. 23:41  
\* In other words Jesus on the cross by His very nature was out of place!
- 2) It is used of Paul when the viper bit him at the island of Malta and he didn't die, again the result of being out of place. Acts 28:6
- 3) It is used of these men who are out of place when it comes to the gospel, antagonistic not open to it. Acts 17:5-10, 2Thess. 3:2  
\* This is the only occasion that it is used for people!
- 2. They are also said to be wicked men in character.
  - a. The word wicked "poneros" means an active evil which takes pleasure not only in the malicious evil done but also in causing others to do evil and corrupting them by evil.
  - b. The petition in the model prayer Jesus taught His disciples was, "Deliver us from the evil one "poneros". Matt. 6:13
    - 1) He is the very source of evil character and conduct.
    - 2) He is the god of this world who is every affecting and influencing

lost man on his bent towards evil,  
to hinder them from coming to the  
gospel. 2Cor. 4:4

- c. The man Cain is described as the wicked one “poneros”. 1Jn. 3:12  
\* The article appearing implies a definite group event. 1Jn. 2:13-14, 5:18-19

C. Paul qualified the spiritual state of these men.

\* “For not all have faith.” vs. 2b

1. The word faith “pistis” in it’s most basic meaning refers to conviction of the truth of anything, belief.
  - a. The word appears nineteen times in the first letter and eight times in the second.
  - b. The word is used in both epistles in two ways, objectively trusting in the gospel or subjectively, describing personal exercise of trust in God.
  - c. The context of our passage is the gospel, objectively, it speaks of faith and trust in the gospel and God for salvation but it equally includes subjective faith.
2. Their identity is in fact an explanation of reason for their being unreasonable and wicked.
  - a. Not all men have faith in the gospel.

- 1) Men love darkness rather than light.  
\* And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil “poneros”. Jn. 3:19
- 2) Men are spiritually dead.  
\* They are dead in their trespasses and sin, children of disobedience and children of wrath. Eph. 2:1-2
- 3) Men knowing there is a God from creation, conscience and history are without excuse.  
\* For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became



futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools. Rom. 1:18-22

- b.** Those that do have faith in the gospel might of begun unreasonable and wicked but were transformed by God's grace and power of the Holy Spirit.
- 1) They have come to the light.
  - 2) They have been made spiritually alive.
  - 3) They uphold the word in truth.

### **Illustration**

The king of Syria one day asked for the confession of the man who was betraying their military plans to the king of Israel. And one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom." So he said, "Go and see where he is, that I may send and get him." And it was told him, saying, "Surely he is in Dothan." Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than

those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. So when the Syrians came down to him, Elisha prayed. 2Kings 6:12-18

### **Application**

**1.** The gospel is offensive to man and without our dependency on God for perseverance we would be killed.

\* Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul disguise and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. Acts 14:19-20

**2.** Know the people who are antagonistic and enemies of the gospel lest you be naive or presumptuous.

\* At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To

Him be glory forever and ever. Amen! 2Tim. 4:16-18

**3.** The opposition to the gospel will only grow worse with time, this is a needed reality in the mind of the believer.

\* But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*. 2Tim. 3:13-14

*Paul requested prayer for protection from evil men!*

### **Conclusion**

Paul's prayer request was for the preaching of the gospel.

- I.** For the human instruments!
- II.** For the word to be effective!
- III.** For protection from evil men!