

PRAYING

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-3:5

(Prepared by Gene Thompson)

1. Which of the following do you spend most of your day talking to? Co-worker? Friend? Spouse? Neighbor? Children? God?
 2. When you talk to God, of what does most of your conversation consist? Praise? Petition for self? Petition for family? Petition for others? Thanksgiving? Forgiveness? Some of all the above?
- We learn from the Model Prayer Jesus gave to the disciples we should begin with praise to our Heavenly Father. But today we are going to be talking about prayer for our brothers and sisters in Christ and maybe what we should ask them to pray for in our lives. Today's passage emphasizes the importance of mutual prayer among believers.
3. What are some things you're currently praying about for those around you? (Praying for others shifts our focus from ourselves to the needs of others.)
 4. When have you received encouragement from someone at a time when you really needed it?
 5. How does knowing someone is praying for you change your perspective? (You realize that not only does God care, another person cares about what is going on in your life. It is an indication that God is working His plan out for you. You are not alone in your struggle.)

Paul concluded his teaching on the man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2:12 and then turned his focus to prayer. He taught the believers there how to pray, with his prayer for them being an example. Paul prayed for the spiritual growth of the church family. He prayed that the church would hold on to biblical teaching and be encouraged, no matter the circumstances.

BE STEADFAST! Read 2 Thess. 2:13-15

1. Why do you think Paul addressed them as "brothers loved by the Lord"? (It's good to be reminded how much God loved us—enough to sacrifice His Son for us.)
- We learn here that God loves us simply because He has chosen to do so. He loves us when no one else loves us. He chooses us to be His children!
2. How do these verses remind readers God is the source of their faith? (Paul provided a summary of God's redemptive plan and was thankful it was evident among these believers. We are chosen by God; sanctified by the Holy Spirit and will be glorified with the Son in eternity.)
 3. What if I don't feel loved by God? What do I do then? (Realizing that you are already forgiven and accepted by God through Christ will help free you up to place all your dependence on Him.)

Believing—having faith—is something you choose to do, not something you feel like doing! Faith is the biblical response to the truth of the Gospel!

Paul's call to "stand firm" is a call to doctrinal stability.

4. What can keep us from "standing firm" in the doctrine of the gospel? (The daily news can discourage us. Not staying in the Word daily can cause us to falter. Etc.)
 5. What does standing firm in the faith look like in action? (Paul encouraged readers to remain faithful to the truth they had received orally and in writing—to be immovable and assured of their beliefs.)
- Fear, doubt, and lies can cause our faith to weaken.

Prayers should be encouraging. Paul shared several things that can and should encourage us even today!

BE ENCOURAGED! Read 2 Thess. 2:16-17

1. For what did Paul pray specifically? (That they would be encouraged and strengthened.)
- Remember these believers had endured persecution.

2. What is the danger of attempting to persevere in our own strength? (Loss of hope. Our enemy is stronger than us but not stronger than God. As we rely on the Holy Spirit for strength the victory will be secure.)
3. What can we learn from Paul's example of repeatedly praying for these believers? (Paul's prayers focused on believers growing in sanctification and in their love for one another. Knowing fellow believers are interceding for us encourages us to do the same.)

In the third chapter Paul shifts from praying for the church family to asking the church family to pray for him, Silas, and Timothy.

BE PRAYERFUL! Read 2 Thess. 3:1-2

1. How did Paul ask the Thessalonian church to pray for him? (That the gospel would spread quickly and be honored. Then that they would be protected from wicked and evil men. This is one of the very few times Paul prayed for protection from his enemies.)

Paul's request reflected humility and dependence on the Lord. This should remind us to pray for missionaries, evangelists and other Christian workers, especially those in our church. Let them know when you pray for them from time to time.

2. What are some reasons we should invite fellow believers to pray for and with us? (We need one another and praying in partnership with others reflects our unity in Christ. intercessory prayer is one way we "carry one another's burdens"—Gal. 6:2.)

One way we can participate in this kind of prayer is our "Church-wide Prayer Meeting" the first Monday of each month at 7:00 PM in the main auditorium. It only last an hour and no one has to pray if you choose not to.

Paul concluded his prayer by focusing on his confidence in God.

BE CONFIDENT! Read 2 Thess. 3:3-5

1. Based on Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians what was he confident He would do? (Strengthen them; guard them from the evil one; and that they would follow Paul's directions.)
2. Why is it important that Paul remind them that God is faithful? (They were under persecution and being reminded that God is faithful would boost their faith. One scholar says that God is called "Faithful" 36 times in Scripture! David Jeremiah says: "**There is no facet of God's nature that is lifted up for praise in Psalms more than His faithfulness.**")
3. Can you give an example of God's faithfulness?
4. How does the Lord's faithfulness spur us to be faithful to Him? (Resisting Satan and temptations is possible with God's help. 1 Cor. 10:13—"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.")

God's divine strength and sustaining power enable believers to do all He has asked of us—2 Pet. 1:3

The Lord is faithful to accomplish His purposes in the lives of those who follow Him—Phil. 1:6.

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."—2 Tim. 2:13.

"There is no limit to the forgiveness and faithfulness of God. We think there must be because there is with us. We get tired of forgiving and being faithful, but God does not. He remains faithful even when we do not."—David Jeremiah.

5. Where did Paul pray their hearts would be directed? ("God's love and Christ's endurance")
- When we excel in love for God we will excel in love for one another!

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE!

1. How is the Holy Spirit leading you to pray more fervently for others? (Jesus is our ultimate model for praying for others in John 17:9-26. We are all equipped to intercede for one another with the Holy Spirit. Prayer joins us to God's kingdom work.)
2. Paul encouraged the church family during their struggle through his prayers for them. Who is someone you know who is in the middle of a struggle that you can encourage this week?

Prayer.