

How Can I Pray For You?

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Thessalonians series #7

May 28, 2023

### PreSermon Comments

- Heads up for parents: next week will be about sexuality

### Introduction & Recap | The Thessalonian Church...

*\*Paul & Crew keep are modelling in the letter what they want for this church. A church that...*

1. ...Is grounded in the gospel
2. ...Is filled with gratitude
3. ...Imitates godly people
4. ...Seeks God's approval, not man's
5. ...Is confident in the message
6. ...Has friendship with God and others
7. ...Prays

### Pastoral Prayers

**1 Thessalonians 3** <sup>9</sup> How can we thank God for you in return for all the joy we experience before our God because of you, <sup>10</sup> as we pray very earnestly night and day...

(big idea) Not a drudgery, and more than duty, prayer is a delight

- Premise (FCF): what a tragedy that many of us experience prayer as a drudgery
- Duty is fine, you can do a lot worse than obligation and "do the right thing"
- But the best is when our time in prayer is a delight
  - You might object, "how can I possibly pray like Paul?"
  - My aim today is to help us all take some steps in that direction

Note: whenever I preach on prayer, I pull out *A Call to Prayer* by J.C. Ryle. IMO, it is the best treatise on prayer ever. His writing makes me want to run through a wall to be with God.

**J.C. Ryle** Faith is to the soul what life is to the body. Prayer is to faith what breath is to the body. How a person can live and not breathe is past my comprehension, and how a person can believe and not pray is past my comprehension too.

Prayer can truly be a delight, but we need to know three things: 1) the basis of our prayers, 2) the basics of our prayers, and 3) the blessing of prayer

## I. The Basis of Prayer

**1 Thessalonians 3** <sup>11</sup> Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you...<sup>13</sup> May he make your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. Amen.

- The message of the gospel is that Jesus is LORD | They're referring to the gospel message
- Think of the gospel message in terms of prayer, talking with God

### Talking with God

- Proximity in the garden | *Portrait of relational closeness, walking and talking*
- Separated by sin | *Closeness and conversation lost*
- God's prophetic word | *He never stops talking, promises of restoration*
- God's incarnate Word | *Jesus, the Word of God made flesh*
  - Heb 1:1-2 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways. 2 In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son.
  - Perfect life, sacrificial death, victorious resurrection
- Welcome invitation | *An advocate with the Father, Heb 10 "let us draw near"*

*\*If not for Jesus, we have no basis for our prayers, no right to talk to him. Thank God for Jesus!*

## II. The Basics of Prayer

**1 Thessalonians 3** <sup>9</sup> How can we thank God for you in return for all the joy we experience before our God because of you,<sup>10</sup> as we pray very earnestly night and day to see you face to face and to complete what is lacking in your faith? [**not defective faith, just not fully grown yet**]<sup>11</sup> Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you.<sup>12</sup> And may the Lord cause you to increase and overflow with love for one another and for everyone, just as we do for you.<sup>13</sup> May he make your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. Amen.

- In this passage, I see **seven** aspects of prayer that are worth considering

### Prayer Elements

1. Trinitarian | 3:11, 1:5
  - a. God our Father...the Lord Jesus...borrowing from ch. 1 Holy Spirit
  - b. Is it OK to pray to any of the three persons of the Trinity? I think yes
  - c. But most often, we pray to the Father through the Son by the Spirit
2. Thankful | 3:9
  - a. *How can we thank God for you*
  - b. Thankful not just for *stuff* but for the people
3. Earnest | 3:10
  - a. *As we pray earnestly night and day...*
  - b. J.C. Ryle vs. 19th cent Anglican ritualism

4. Relational | 3:10-11
  - a. ...see you face to face...direct our way to you...love for one another
  - b. Praying for the people that you love and care about
5. Sanctifying | 3:12-23
  - a. Love for one another...hearts blameless in holiness
  - b. Pray for other Christians to be more like Jesus
  - c. 3rd value: Growing Together
6. Evangelistic | 3:12
  - a. ...and for everyone...
  - b. We should know our faith, we should be gracious and bold in our evangelism, we should seek inroads and opportunities, but...at the end of the day, only God saves
7. Maranatha | 3:13
  - a. at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.
  - b. Pray for Jesus to return

*\*Note: this is not an exhaustive list, but representative. Important things like repentance or spiritual warfare are not explicitly mentioned here. But the point is not to have the exact right blueprint or formula; the point is to be with and talk with your God.*

### **III. The Blessing of Prayer**

**1 Thessalonians 3** <sup>9</sup> ...all the joy we experience before our God because of you.

- This joy is about the people but it is **before** God. *Emprosthen*. In his presence. With him.
  - **Your. God. Wants. To. Be. With. You.**
- In his presence, there is abundance of joy (16:11)
- There is such joy, happiness, blessedness to have in communion with God in prayer

**J.C. Ryle** We live in a world where sorrow abounds. This has always been the state since sin came in...Sickness, deaths, losses, disappointments, partings, separations, ingratitude, slander, all these are common things. We cannot get through life without them. Some day or other they find us out. The greater are our affections the deeper are our afflictions, and the more we love the more we have to weep. And what is the best means of cheerfulness in such a world as this? How shall we get through this valley of tears with the least pain? I know no better means than the habit of taking everything to God in prayer...The only way to really be happy in such a world as this, is to be ever casting all our cares on God. It is trying to carry their own burdens which so often makes believers sad...Jesus can make those happy who trust Him and call Him, whatever be their outward condition. He can give them peace of heart in a prison, contentment in the midst of poverty, comfort in the midst of bereavements, joy on the brink of the grave. There is a mighty fullness in Him for all His believing members—a fullness that is ready to be poured out on everyone that will ask in prayer. Oh that people would understand that happiness does not depend on outward

circumstances, but on the state of the heart...I want you to be happy. I know I cannot ask you a more useful question than this: DO YOU PRAY?

- Personal: it's been an emotionally challenging week. Opportunities to pray
- Application points, but let's just pray

### **PRAYER TIME**

\*Three options: prayer team, prayer groups, pray on your own

1. Prayer focus #1: gratitude
2. Prayer focus #2: building up of the saints
3. Prayer focus #3: salvation for the lost
4. Prayer focus #4: return of Jesus

### **Application**

1. Remind yourself of prayer's joy
2. Practice various methods of prayer
3. Pray for people whom you love

**J.C. Ryle** Our prayers may be weak, stammering, and poor in our eyes. But if they come from a right heart, God understands them. Such prayers are his delight.

### **The Lord's Table**

- Think of this like a prayer
- Because of Jesus' broken body and shed blood, we can draw near to God
- Nothing magical in the bread and wine, but a symbol of God's closeness