

Praying
May 22, 2022
Allen Power

2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

Imagine you were discipling a person who is new in their Christian journey. What kinds of things would you pray on their behalf? (Come prepared to share)

The Lifeway title for this lesson is simply, *“Praying.”* I composed my own title: *“An Apostle’s Prayer List for New Followers of Christ.”* The Apostle Paul not only planted churches, he prayed for them! He prayed for them specifically, strategically, passionately, and regularly [after all he IS the one who wrote, *“pray without ceasing”*]. He also asked THEM to pray for HIM and his ministry.

In his book *“Pray Big”* (based on the prayers of Paul) Alistair Begg writes, *“Paul was a great pray-er. He was confident, he was committed, and he was humble and bold and compassionate. He clearly enjoyed prayer, and was excited about it. He expected his Father in heaven to hear what he said and to act in other people’s lives accordingly. He prayed and then was “watchful in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4 v 2), ready to see how God would be pleased to answer his prayers. Paul prayed big prayers because he believed great things. Let’s learn from him how we might do the same.”*

As we finish our study in 2 Thessalonians, let’s ponder Paul’s “prayer list” for new followers of Christ. Better yet, let’s walk away committing to pray like Paul did.

We begin in chapter two verse thirteen with our pens or highlighters in hand:

13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. **14** To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. **15** So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken

word or by our letter. **16** Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, **17** comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. **1** Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, **2** and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. **3** But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. **4** And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. **5** May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

- In 13&14: Underline, “thanks to God,” “God chose you,” “to be saved.”
- Remember the context: he had just spoken about those whose hearts will be hardened in the tribulation and not be saved. Paul was thanking God THAT didn’t describe these dear brothers and sisters.
- We should thank God for those He clearly chose to save before the “foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4) and to “obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Stated plainly: *“Thank you Lord for saving me and for saving my brothers and sisters who are also in Christ.”*
- Verse 15: Paul prayed for them to “stand firm” in what he had taught them.
- Don’t stumble on the word “traditions.” It means, *“what was handed down.”*
- We should pray for new followers of Christ to “stand firm” in biblical truth!
- Verses 16 & 17: Paul reminded them God the Son and the Father “loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace.”
- Then he asked God to “comfort” their hearts (while in persecution) and “establish them in every good work and word.”
- We should pray for ourselves and other believers to receive comfort, hope, and to develop a firm spiritual foundation that can’t be shaken.
- We should ask God to help them and us to have “good works and words.”

- Chapter three verse one: Paul wasn't bashful to ask them to pray for him and his ministry. Do you pray for your pastor, church, and for missions?
- We should pray, as Paul asked them, that *"the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored"* and that souls would be saved.
- Verse two: What do you think Paul meant by *"delivered from wicked and evil men...for not all have faith"*? How should we pray about this?
- Verse three: He reminds them: *"The Lord is faithful. He will establish you (firm spiritual foundation) and guard you against the evil one."*
- Christians both in the pulpit and the pew have a target on our backs from "wicked and evil" people. Satan also targets us through temptation to sin.
- Many salivate at the thought of a prominent pastor or leader having a huge moral failure. I wonder if they pray for them NOT to fall?
- Let's pray for others and ourselves for deliverance from evil and harm.
- Verse four: He prays expressing "confidence" that they "are doing" and "will do" the commands of Christ passed on to them through Paul.
- Jesus said, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."*ⁱⁱ We should pray that every follower of Christ we know is obedient to Christ.
- Verse five asks God to "direct" the "hearts" of these Christ-followers toward "the love of God." We need to pray for others and ourselves to remember and feel God's love.
- Paul wrote in Romans 8:39 that nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ."ⁱⁱⁱ He also wrote in Ephesians 3:19 that we may "know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge..."^{iv}
- On our worst day a Christ-follower never needs to feel unloved.
- We should pray that those who are "in Christ" would KNOW His love.
- Paul also prayed their hearts would know the "steadfastness of Christ."

- The word “steadfastness” means *patient* endurance.^v Aren’t you glad the Lord patiently endures all our faults and failures yet still loves us?
- As I read the Psalms each day I notice how the “steadfast love” of the Lord is mentioned over and over. I did a count. 248 times in 123 verses.
- We need to ask God to remind us and those we love who are in Christ, of His patience and steadfast love for us.
- This is a pretty good prayer list just from this passage alone!
- What if we went back and surveyed these two letters to the church in Thessalonica? What did Paul tell them he was praying on their behalf?

What Paul prayed for this church in 1&2 Thessalonians:

- **Grace and peace.** (1:1) – Peace of God and peace with God by His grace
- **Their faith and love** - Remembering...your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (1:3)
- **Their belief in scripture** - We also thank God constantly...that when you received the word of God... you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you (2:13)
- **To see them and teach them** - We pray...night and day that we may see you face-to-face and supply what is lacking in your faith... (3:10)
- **To love each other** - May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all...(3:12)
- **To be blameless and holy** - ...that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God (3:13)
- **To be sanctified** - May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. (5:23-24)
- **For growing faith and love** - We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. (1:3)

- **To be worthy of God's calling** - We always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, (1:11)
- **To glorify God** - ...that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus... (1:12)
- **To feel His peace and presence at all times**...may the Lord of peace ...give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all. (3:16)
- Add that to the verses we looked at earlier and it's quite a prayer list!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- We should all have a prayer list for ourselves and other Christ-followers.
- Paul was a great example of praying this way for those who are in Christ.
- One of his most touching and comprehensive prayers of this type comes from Ephesians 3. If you want a good prayer you can pray for those Christ-followers you love, you couldn't go wrong with praying Paul's words in these verses:

Ephesians 3:14–21 (ESV) — 14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, **16** that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **19** and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. **20** Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- This week, let's make it our aim and priority to pray this way for those we love (and for ourselves) who are in Christ. When you

stop to pray, picture old Paul sitting in a prison cell looking up to Heaven and pray like he did!

ⁱ Begg, Alistair. Pray Big: Learn to Pray Like an Apostle . The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 14:15). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

ⁱⁱⁱ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ro 8:39). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^{iv} [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Eph 3:19). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^v Thomas, R. L. (1998). [New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition](#). Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.