

II Thessalonians 1

Praying Like Paul

1. In II Thess 1: 3-4 Paul gives thanks for the Thessalonian Christians. What two things does he give thanks for?
2. Why doesn't he take these things for granted? (See II Thess 1:4, I Thess 3: 2-5; I Thess 5: 14-15)
3. Take a look around your group. What are you thankful for in each other? Take some time to give thanks to God.
4. Paul doesn't ignore the difficulties the Thessalonian church have been facing. How does he encourage them? (See II Thess 1: 5-10) [Hint: don't get bogged down in the detail.]
5. What are the challenges Christians face today? How does remembering that Jesus is coming again in power to judge help us in our current circumstances?
6. V11, 'With this in mind', keeping in mind that Jesus will come again Paul prays for the Thessalonians. 'Calling' in the New Testament always refers to God calling us to believe, to become Christians. What does it mean to live our lives worthy of having been called, lives worthy of God (I Thess 2:12)? (See also Gal 5: 16 – 26)
7. Paul also prays that by his power God will bring about the desired results of every good the Thessalonians desire and their actions prompted by faith. Elsewhere, Paul reminds us that we are saved by faith not the good things we do (Eph 2: 8-10). Why would Paul be praying for good results from the actions of the Thessalonians? (See also James 2: 14-17)
8. What is the reason for Paul's praying? If the answer to Paul's prayer will come by the grace of God, what does he mean that we might be glorified in Jesus? (II Thess 1: 12)

Pray Together

Re-write Paul's prayer in your own words and pray that for each other.

Going Deeper:

For more on praying like Paul check out *Praying with Paul – a Call to Spiritual Reformation* by D.A. Carson. (Older editions bear the title *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers*)

II Thessalonians 2

Standing Firm

II Thessalonians 2: 1-12

II Thess 2: 1-12 is probably one of the most difficult passages that Paul wrote, for us to understand. The Thessalonians had more information from Paul than we do (see v5). As you read the passage, do so knowing we can't understand all the detail but that there are truths about God and false teachers we can learn from.

1. What appears to have upset the Thessalonians (see v 1-2)? How do false ideas and untruths enter the church today?
2. Paul refers to an unleashing of evil prior to Jesus coming again (see v3; see also I Tim 4: 1-3). What are the characteristics of the man of lawlessness (sin)? (See v4, 7, 9 – 10a)
3. What do we learn about Jesus Christ in relation to perpetrators of evil, including the man of lawlessness? (See v8; see also II Thess 1: 7b – 9)
4. V10b – 12 are difficult for us to understand today. In the Bible God, in his sovereignty, does use the evil consequences of sin to punish the sinner. What are the characteristics of and consequences for people who follow the man of lawlessness?

II Thessalonians 2: 13-17

5. Once again Paul gives thanks because the Thessalonian Christians were loved by the Lord and chosen by him, just as we are. What does he say are the two elements of salvation? (See v13; See also I Pet 1:2)
6. Paul knew the Thessalonians would be going through more turbulent times. What does Paul recommend the Thessalonians and we do in turbulent times or when false ideas keep coming our way? (See v15)
7. When faced with difficult times or new ideas that challenge your faith what do you normally turn to for truth? How might we apply Paul's recommendation practically?
8. What do we learn about God that gives us confidence to stand firm in our faith? (See v13-14, 16-17)

Pray Together

Use vs 16-17 to pray for each other, especially anyone experiencing difficulties that are challenge to faith.

II Thessalonians 3

Standing Firm

Paul urges the Thessalonians to stand firm through prayer and action.

1. What does Paul encourage us to pray for? (V1-2) [The tense of the Greek suggests pray continually!]
2. What examples of God's word spreading rapidly are you aware of?
3. On what basis does Paul ask prayer? (V3-4) (See also 2 Tim 2:13; Phil 1:6)
4. How does God's love and Christ's perseverance help us stand firm in prayer? (V5)
5. Some in the Thessalonian church were disruptive to the life of their community (v11). What was their particular problem (v 6-13)? In what ways can the life of our church community be disrupted today?
6. What does Paul suggest as a means of dealing with the problem of disruptive behaviour (v6, 13-15)? How might we apply this in our culture?
7. Think carefully about Paul's final greetings (v16, 18). In what way is peace and grace important for maintaining the life of a church community and the rapid spread of God's word?

Pray Together

Take time to pray for the Lord's word to spread rapidly in your community and through our mission partners. Pray for protection for those directly involved.