

STUDY NUMBER SIX - 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

How Is Your Prayer Life?

Key Verse 3:11: "Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you;"

TEXT:

v.11 Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you;
v.12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you;
v.13 so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness in the presence of our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

INTRODUCTION:

Someone has said:

A day without prayer is a day without blessing. And a life without prayer is a life without power.

(Point Man: How a Man Can Lead a Family by Steve Farrar)

Listen to Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

If he [Satan] causes us to neglect the reading and studying of the Word, and the understanding of the Word, it will suit him admirably. If he causes us to neglect praying we shall faint, and in that condition become an easy and obvious prey . . . if you really believe that just to read a few verses and a short comment on them in a matter of five minutes, and to have a brief word of prayer, is adequate for your day, then I say that you do not know anything about the wiles of the devil. That is not the New Testament; that has not been the verdict of the saints throughout the centuries. But a superficial spirituality imagines that is enough--"I have . . . had my quiet time"--not aware of any stagnation in the soul, not aware of a lack of growth, not aware of an appalling superficiality.

p. 146

(Simple Faith by Charles R. Swindoll)

I was at the grocery store down the street the other evening, and in a bit of a hurry. As usual, the lines were long and everyone, it seemed, was buying enough to feed the entire roster of the Los Angeles Rams. Right in front of me was a hassled mother with three small, active boys who appeared to be about ten or eleven months apart in age. The youngest was the busiest of them all. He was perched in the shopping-cart seat, leaning over toward the gum and candy bars with two outstretched arms and repeating the same line over and over again as Mama was trying to unload her cart. The other two were shoving and arguing with each other. She was trying to referee while junior kept up his pleading:

"Mama, I want some TicTacs . . . Mama, I want some TicTacs. Mama, I want some TicTacs . . . Mama, I want some TicTacs."

By now most folks in all the lines were looking in his direction, but the little guy never let up.

"Mama, I want some TicTacs. Mama, I want some TICTACS. Mama, I WANT SOME TICTACS. **MAMA, I WANT SOME TICTACS. MAMAIWANTSOMETICTACS!!!**"

Even though I was not "Mama," I was about to unload the case of TicTacs on the kid when Mama reached her breaking point. "NO . . . AND STOP ASKING!" she screamed in a voice that carried six stores away, I'm sure. He never stopped. Suddenly, to my surprise, she grabbed a box of TicTacs and shoved them into his hands. I then realized why the kid kept asking. He had learned that it worked!
pp. 138-39

(I Want to Grow Hair, I Want to Grow Up, I Want to Go to Boise by Erma Bombeck)

She is not unlike the story of the Jewish grandmother who took her grandson to the beach one day, complete with bucket, shovel, and sun hat. The grandmother dozed off and as she slept, a large wave dragged the child out to sea. The grandmother awoke and was devastated. She fell to the ground on her knees and prayed, "God, if you save my grandchild I promise I'll make it up to you. I'll join whatever club you want me to. I'll volunteer at the hospital, give to the poor, and do anything that makes you happy."

Suddenly, a huge wave tossed her grandson on the beach at her feet. She noticed color in his cheeks and his eyes were bright. He was alive. As she stood up, however, she seemed to be upset. She put her hands on her hips, looked skyward, and said sharply, "He had a hat, you know."
pp. 56-57

George Mueller of Bristol, England, cared for hundreds of orphans, meeting their needs through daily miracles of answered prayer. He tells the story of one memorable morning when he had them bow their heads to thank God for the provision of breakfast. Unknown to the children, nothing had been prepared, for the cupboard was bare. Then it was that a large sack of breakfast meal was delivered by a wealthy man who felt strangely constrained to do so. Truly, living from hand to mouth does not seem very desirable unless it is God's hand and your mouth.

Events such as these are little seen today. In the Bible they happen over and over again. God has not changed. We have changed. Our confidence in our own ability and our own self-sufficiency keeps us from asking God to deal with our problems in mighty power. Prayer changes things, even men's lives. The reason we are not seeing more people converted and Christians witnessing is prayerlessness.

In making a SPIRITUAL CHECKUP in the book of 1 Thessalonians we have asked ourselves to this point 5 QUESTIONS probing for some areas of need:

1. Did You Make the Right Start by receiving Christ as Savior? - Chapter 1:1-10
2. Are You a Phony? - Chapter 2:1-12
3. Has Satan Hindered You? - Chapter 2:13-20
4. Are You Discouraged by the Problems? - Chapter 3:1-5
5. Are You an Encouragement to Others in Your Walk with the Lord? - Chapter 3:6-10

In making any SPIRITUAL CHECKUP like we are doing here in the book of 1 Thessalonians, it is awfully important that we probe into our prayer life:

How much do we really pray?

How consistent are we in prayer?

How much do we really believe God to undertake in our behalf?

These questions can only be answered by each of us individually.

John 16:24

Until now you have asked nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.

EVEN WHEN IT'S PAINFUL

The following humorous story appears in the autobiography of Clarence E. McCartney: As two men were walking through a field one day, they spotted an enraged bull. Instantly they darted toward the nearest fence. The storming bull followed in hot pursuit, and it was soon apparent they wouldn't make it. Terrified, the one shouted to the other, "Put up a prayer, John. We're in for it!" John answered, "I can't. I've never made a public prayer in my life." "But you must!" implored his companion. "The bull is catching up to us." "All right," panted John, "I'll say the only prayer I know, the one my father used to repeat at the table: 'O Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful.'" This fictitious story suggests a valuable truth. No matter how severe the trial, Christians should give thanks in everything.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

HINDERED BY SATAN

John Dorsey describes the devil's tactics in the following poetic words: "I had a battle fierce today within my place of prayer; I went to meet and talk with God, but I found Satan there. He whispered, 'You can't really pray, you lost out long ago; you might say words while on your knees, but you can't pray, you know.' So then I pulled my helmet down, way down upon my ears, and found it helped to still his voice and helped allay my fears. I checked my other armor o'er; My feet in peace were shod; my loins with truth were girded 'round; my sword the Word of God. My righteous breastplate still was on, my heart's love to protect. My shield of faith was all intact--his fiery darts bounced back. I called on God in Jesus' name, I pled the precious blood--while Satan sneaked away in shame, I met and talked with God!"

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

Matthew 6:7-13

And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him. Pray, then, in this way:

'Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
[For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.]'

(The Solid Rock Construction Company by Haddon W. Robinson)

Helmut Thielicke, a German theologian, pointed out that the whole of life is captured in the rainbow of these requests. "Great things, small things, spiritual things and material things, inward things and outward things--there is nothing that is not included in this prayer."
p. 40

(When You're Tired of Treating the Symptoms and You're Ready for a Cure, Give Me a Call: 18 Lessons for Making Changes That Last by Henry R. Brandt)

Prayer is just talking to God with our mouth or with our heart. How is it possible to pray without ceasing? Does this mean that one stops doing everything else and just continuously talks to God? What would you talk about? Do you ignore your family and friends? What about going to work and interacting with the people there? Going shopping? Going visiting? This verse surely can't mean what it says.

I can commit my day into God's hands. I can tell him what I want to have happen. I can compare what happens with what my requests were. Then whatever happens, I can depend on a living God to look after me and I can trust Him to give me a day's supply of joy. Life may not always make sense, but I can always trust Him.

It is never dull talking with God because his plans are always different and better than ours:
p. 183

Some people tell us that prayer is all in the mind,
 That the only result is the solace we find,
 That God does not answer nor hear when we call.
 We commune with our hearts in prayer, that is all.
 But we who have knelt with our burden and care,
 And made all our problems a matter of prayer,
 Have seen God reach down from His heaven above,
 Move mountains, touch hearts in His infinite love.
 We know that God works in a wonderful way
 On behalf of His children who trust Him and pray.

Walvoord observes:

In verses 11 and 12 Paul breathes another prayer, that he might go back and see the Thessalonians again: "Now God himself and our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way unto you; and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you." In other words, Paul said, "Let us go on in our Christian faith." The most dangerous thing in our spiritual experience is to ease off and to rest on our oars. Normal Christian growth brings with it an increase in love to each other and to all men. While the Thessalonians were a model church, there was still room for growth and improvement.

Barclay says:

It is in a simple passage like this that the instinctive turn of the mind of Paul is best seen. For Paul everything was of God.

(i) He prays to God to open a way for him whereby he may come to Thessalonica. It is to God that Paul turned for guidance in the ordinary day to day problems of life. If he contemplated a journey it is to God he turned to open up the way. One of the great and grace mistakes of life is to turn to God only in the great moments and the overpowering emergencies and the shattering crises.

p. 228

Lange observes:

The apostle's fervent spirit overflows in prayer, not merely in his chamber, but in the epistle itself.

Barnhouse observes:

And this is the way Paul lived, too. He wrote under the Holy Spirit's guidance. Suddenly, as the Spirit brought some particular need to his mind as he was writing, Paul would break right into his writing with an appeal to God as here in verses 11 to 13.

1 Thessalonians 3:10

night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith?

This was the last verse in STUDY #5.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This verse gives another glimpse into the apostle Paul's private life. He prayed night and day most earnestly that God would let him see them again. Much of Paul's private life was occupied by prayer.

Chapter 1:2

We are always giving thanks to God for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;

Chapter 2:13

And because of this we also are constantly giving thanks to God, because when you took to yourselves the word of divine preaching that goes out from us, you welcomed not the word of men, but even as truly it is, God's word, which also is operating in you who are believing.

Verses 11-13 now amplify verse 10.

v.11 Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you;

The little word "MAY" is going to occur 3 times, once in each of the 3 verses.

And in each of these 3 verses we have 3 petitions.

Verse 11 is the KEY VERSE to this particular study, "How Is Your Prayer Life?"

Paul started this letter in prayer giving thanks to God for the Thessalonians.

Now here in the middle of the letter he breaks into prayer again.

Then we are going to see him pray at the conclusion of the letter.

Because of the joy in the heart of the apostle after having received the "good news" which he received from Timothy, his heart breaks forth in prayer and praise that God might continue on to completion the work which is going on in Thessalonica.

This prayer that Paul is praying helps us understand his heart as he would like to be reunited with them, to be able to "complete that which is lacking in their faith."

It would be good for us to have a few moments of reflection and evaluate our own prayer life:

How much time do we spend?

What are the things we pray for?

Are worship and praise a part of our prayer life?

UPLINKS AND DOWNLINKS

On July 20, 1976, the Viking I spacecraft touched down on the surface of Mars. Programmed to work until 1994, it pleased scientists by performing beautifully and sending back information whenever it was asked--that is, until November 19, 1982. On that day the Viking flight team at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory radioed some instructions up to the spacecraft's computer, expecting an appropriate response. But no answer came. The "uplinked" message from earth was not acknowledged, and no "downlink" reply was ever given. Despite concentrated efforts by a team of experts, the spacecraft remains silent. No one knows whether it will ever respond to earth signals again.

The Christian, in his "uplink" prayer messages to God, has the assurance that he'll never have that problem. If his heart is right, his communication will never go unheeded.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

Psalm 66:18-20

If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened;
but God has surely listened
and heard my voice in prayer.
Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!

Isaiah 59:1, 2

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save,
nor his ear too dull to hear.
But your iniquities have separated
you from your God;
Your sins have hidden his face from you,
so that he will not hear.

NO ANSWERS

Causes of unanswered prayer: 1) not praying, 2) unconfessed sin, 3) broken relationships, 4) selfishness, 5) uncaring attitude, 6) inadequate faith.

"No answers" by Bill Hybels. Campus Life, Sept 1989.
p. 40

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

(Don't Just Stand There, Pray Something: The Incredible Power of Intercessory Prayer by Ronald Dunn)

What is so special about this praying in the name of Jesus? And not only praying in His name, but also living in His name? Paul instructs that whatever we do "in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17).

The name of Jesus is not a secret code that works some kind of magical spell when it is invoked, like "Open Sesame!" or "Shazam!" It isn't a tool with which to manipulate God. To pray in the name of Jesus means to pray "by the authority of," "in harmony with," or "sanctioned by" Jesus Christ. He has given us the right to pray in His name because we are His representatives, and we ask as His representatives because we are about His business.

In Luke 9:48 Jesus said, "Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me." To receive someone in Jesus' name is like receiving Jesus Himself. Jesus is totally identified with His name, and to recognize that name means to recognize fully who He is and what He has done.
p. 45

To pray in the name of Jesus, then, is to pray according to His will, with His approval, and consistent with His nature, character and purpose. Therefore, it is as though Jesus Himself were making the request. That is our authority.
p. 46

God sent me some more light in a surprising way. We were in Arkansas visiting my brother and his family, and the county fair was in full swing. One night we loaded everybody into the car and went to the fair. We weren't there long until it became obvious our children were not interested in the blue-ribbon hogs or the award-winning heifers. They wanted to get to the rides. So, abandoning the more cultural aspects of the fair, we headed for the carnival and cotton candy.

All the rides were ten cents apiece. We bought a big roll of red ten-cent tickets and got organized. At the time my brother had one child, Rebecca; I had three--Ron, Jr., Stephen and Kimberly. I positioned myself at the entrance of the rides and as the kids came by, holding out their hands, I tore off a red ten-cent ticket and gave it to them.

I was standing at the entrance to the Tilt-A-Whirl with the roll of tickets. First, Rebecca came by, holding out her hand, and I gave her a ticket. Then Kimberly came by with her hand out and I gave her a ticket. Ronnie was next, then Stephen, each holding out his hand for a red ten-cent ticket.

Right behind Stephen came a little boy I'd never seen in my life--holding out his hand for a red ten-cent ticket. Who is this kid? What's he trying to pull? These tickets cost ten cents apiece--you don't go around giving them away to every kid who has his hand out. The boy stood there, hand outstretched, waiting. I ignored him. He stood there; the line behind him began to pile up. Would-be Tilt-a-Whirl riders grew restless and demanded to know what the holdup was. Finally, Stephen turned around, pointed to this importunate little beggar and said, "Dad, this is my friend. I told him you would give him a ticket."

Friend! We hadn't been there twenty minutes. I looked down. The boy was still standing there, holding out his hand.

Do you know what I did? I tore off a red ten-cent ticket and gave it to him--not because I wanted to, or because he deserved it, but because my son had told this boy that his dad would give him a ticket. I wasn't about to embarrass my son or make him out to be a liar.

Though he didn't realize it, the little boy was asking for a ticket "in Stephen's name." And I gave him a ticket "in Stephen's name." I made good the word of my son.
pp. 48-49

Praying in the name of Jesus is the second of what I call the Big Three that we have met so far. By the Big Three I mean the three qualifiers of all prayer. Every petition is formed within the context of these provisions: (1) the Will of God; (2) the Name of Jesus; and (3) the Glory of God. Nothing done in the name of Jesus would be contrary to God's will or inconsistent with His glory. So it is correct to say that I can pray in the name of Jesus only when what I ask for is according to His will, and when the answer will bring glory to God.
p. 54

"NOW MAY OUR GOD AND FATHER HIMSELF AND OUR LORD JESUS DIRECT OUR WAY TO YOU."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

God was the object of his prayers. One can hardly conceive of a stronger way for Paul to indicate his unquestioning acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus and His oneness with the Father.

Paul recognizes God's sovereignty, and that He is the One who guides and directs in life. He is the One who leads the way. The secret to real fulfillment and effective praying is found in surrendering to His sovereignty.

(Charismatic Chaos by John F. MacArthur, Jr.)

Note that both Price and Tilton recoil from praying, "If it be Thy will." That is a common characteristic of Word Faith teachers. As we noted, they love to quote John 14:14: "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." But 1 John 5:14 is noticeably missing from their database: "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (emphasis added). Hagin goes so far as to claim that no such truth is taught in the New Testament:

Because we didn't understand what Jesus said, and because we've been religiously brainwashed instead of New Testament-taught, we watered down the promises of God and tacked on something that Jesus didn't say, and added on something else to it: "Well, He will all right if it's His will, but it might not be His will," people have said. And yet, you don't find that kind of talk in the New Testament.

Hagin has also written, "It is unscriptural to pray, 'If it is the will of God.' When you put an 'if' in your prayer, you are praying in doubt."

Yet 1 John 5:14 clearly includes an "if." Furthermore, Romans 8:27 tells us that even the Holy Spirit "intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (emphasis added).

And what will the Word Faith movement do with James 4:13-16? Does not their most fundamental teaching utterly contradict this passage?

Come now, you who say "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that." But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

p. 287

(Healing and Holiness by Samuel C. Storms)

I agree with David Hubbard that the one who suffers most from this approach to divine healing is God himself.

Setting fixed terms which decide whether he performs healing or not nudges us across the border that separates providence from magic and trespasses on God's right to be Lord. It preempts his authority to decide when and how to manifest his power. It makes our conformity to certain conditions rather than his sovereignty the ultimate ground of how he works. In the process, everyone loses. We find it hard to cling to God's love when healing does not take place, and God becomes servant of our needs and not Master of our destiny.

pp. 10-11

Paul's 1st request then is:

"NOW MAY OUR GOD AND FATHER HIMSELF AND OUR LORD JESUS DIRECT
OUR WAY TO YOU."

May He clear the way.

Proverbs 3:5, 6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.

Psalms 37:23, 24

If the Lord delights in a man's way,
he makes his steps firm;
though he stumble, he will not fall,
for the Lord upholds him with his hand.

Psalms 32:8

I will instruct you and teach you in the
way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.

Isaiah 30:21

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

These men were led by God. They were led by God because they prayed.

John Calvin says:

He now prays that the Lord, having removed Satan's obstructions, may open a door for himself and be, as it were, the leader and director of his way to the Thessalonians.

Paul in his 2 previous attempts has been hindered by Satan, and now he commits his way to God to direct them to Thessalonica.

When God answers our prayer with a "no," the "no" always obligates God to reveal a better plan.

Alfred says:

If he, that is, the Lord Jesus, expedites the way, it will be accomplished; for greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.

WHAT BRINGS THE MOST GLORY?

The Norwegian theologian Ole Hallesby said we should pray something like this: "Lord, if it will be to Your glory, heal suddenly. If it will glorify You more, heal gradually; if it will glorify You even more, may your servant remain sick awhile; and if it will glorify Your name still more, take him to Yourself in heaven."

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

(Why Christians Sin: Avoiding the Dangers of an Uncommitted Life by J. Kirk Johnston)

Paul Little touched on this when he said,

I get very suspicious of people who come with very pious and spiritual language, telling me that God has led them to do some wild, outlandish thing, and nobody else has gotten the message. Undoubtedly, God may in rare instances guide us in a way that is totally contrary to the thinking of equally committed Christians, but I think it would be the rare exception rather than the rule.

p. 101

(The Good Shepherd by Haddon W. Robinson)

David says that if the Lord is your Shepherd, every area and activity of your life is under His direction, protection, and control. Complaining has become a fine talent in modern life. We can excuse it by saying that it is a safety valve that lets off the pressure of pent-up resentment and frustration. Maybe so. But is that the mark of a sheep? Should a Christian complain? When he does, he is saying that he does not have what he wants, does not like his situation, and the whole thing is not quite fair. But the psalmist declares, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.["]

p. 10

Barclay, in his commentary, makes an interesting observation:

Not long ago I was talking to 3 young men who had just completed a yachting expedition up the West coast of Scotland. One said to me, "You know, when you are at home you never listen to the weather forecasts, but when we were on that yacht we listened to them with all our ears. It was quite possible to do without the weather forecast when life was comfortably safe. It was essential to listen to them when life might depend on them."

We are apt to try to do the same with God. In ordinary things we disregard Him, thinking that we can manage well enough by ourselves. In the emergency we clutch at Him, knowing that we cannot get through without Him. It was not so with Paul. Even in the ordinary, routine thing like a journey from Athens to Thessalonica, it is to God that Paul looked for guidance and direction. We use God to try to achieve a God-rescued life. Paul companioned with God to achieve a God-directed life.

Hogg and Vine say:

Paul had earnestly and strenuously endeavored to come to them but in vain. Satan had successfully opposed him. But over all is God, and, to God, their Father and his, and to the Lord Jesus, their Lord and his, the apostle made his final appeal. Nor does he refer to the subject again throughout the epistles. God is mightier than Satan and wiser than His servants. So all is well. We see what was hidden from Paul and his adversary, for out of Satan's success and the apostle's disappointment came these epistles which have enriched the churches and comforted the saints ever since.

Barnes points out:

The Greek word means "to guide straight towards or upon anything." It is rendered "guide" in Luke 1:79 and "direct" here and in 2 Thess. 3:5. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The idea is that of conducting one straight to a place and not by a roundabout course. Here the petition is that God would remove all obstacles so that he could come directly to them.

Ryrie says:

Paul now prays for the believers in order that they might be made complete in their faith. His first petition is that he might be brought to them. It would be God and Christ who would do this. It is important to notice that our Lord Jesus Christ is linked with God Himself as closely as possible, and furthermore, that the verb is singular. There could scarcely be a clearer way of emphasizing the deity of Christ and His equality with the Father.

Horne says:

These verses record one of the many short prayers to be found in Paul's letters. It expresses the apostle's desire for a reunion but not without a recognition of the sovereign will of God. Even his incidental remarks reveal how much the sovereignty of God means to him.

Stedman, in outlining this passage, says:

Finally, Paul prayed specifically, verses 10-13. He had some definite prayer requests, 5 of them in fact:

1. He longed to "see them face to face." He desired to get back to Thessalonica once more to have the joy of seeing his dear friends.
2. He wanted to minister further to them: "that we may supply what is lacking in your faith." The Thessalonians needed to know a great deal more about the Christian view of the world and of life. When we understand how to look at the events of life from the perspective of the word of God we are being realistic. All the confusion and illusion disappear and we can begin to see things the way they really are.
3. He prayed to overcome satanic hindrance: "Our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you." Are you finding it difficult to get where you want to go? Paul shows us how to pray that God will open a way, either physically or spiritually to the intended goal. Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7). That is how Paul prayed. He knocked on this closed door, asking that he might get back to Thessalonica. Later accounts reveal that God did answer that prayer and he did return to these believers.
4. He prayed that their love might increase: According to the New Testament this is the mark of a successful church.
5. He prayed that they might continue to live righteously until the Lord comes: "May He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when the Lord Jesus comes with all of His holy ones." The coming of Jesus is no further away for you and me than it was for the believers in Thessalonica, since it is no further away than the end of your life or mine. He comes for us if we know Him when we die. Paul therefore prayed that the rest of their lives might be marked by unblamable living.

Hendricksen observes:

The question may be asked: Did God really grant this petition? If we bear in mind that the prayer had been offered in complete submission to the divine will, the answer is yes. Besides, there is Acts 20:1-2 which indicates Paul in his 3rd missionary journey gave much encouragement to those in Macedonia. The possibility of a still later visit between the first and the 2nd Roman imprisonment must not be excluded (see 1 Tim. 1:3). Of course, the time and the manner in which God answers prayer is not determined by us but by Him.

Lenski, in commenting on this 11th verse, says:

May He so guide the course of our missionary work that we may get to you (Thessalonians) to do the further work we have indicated.

This wish in prayer was not fulfilled except that the writers did indeed revisit Thessalonica, but not for a period of intensive work such as verse 10 evidently contemplates. The Father and the Lord manage the church. They directed Paul and his workers for 4 weeks in Thessalonica, 18 months in Corinth. The results were good. The wishes and prayers of Paul were uttered in submission to the divine will. Let us learn from him also in regard to our missionary work.

Lange says:

All our steps and ways are in God's hand. To everything He must give His consent. To commit our way unto the Lord is the grand secret of a safe, contented, and truly happy and prosperous life.

Genesis 24:40

He replied, "The Lord, before whom I have walked, will send his angel with you and make your journey a success, so that you can get a wife for my son from my own clan and from my father's family."

Jeremiah 10:23

I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own;
it is not for man to direct his steps.

James 4:13-17

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that." But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.

(Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life by
Barbara Johnson)

WHATEVER YOU WANT, LORD . . .

W - Whoever You put in, or take out of my life . . .
H - However You want things to end up . . . only You see
the big picture.
A - As much as I can take, Lord . . . You know me best because
T - Time is nothing to You . . . help me to be patient.
E - Everything is in Your hands . . . Help me to let go.
V - Victory comes with You as my Guide.
E - Eternity with You will be worth it all!
R - Restoration is mine through You.
p. 65

POOR ASKING - RICH RECEIVING

James H. McConkey says that one summer he took a vacation on the shores of the Great Lakes. Because he was ill, sailing was the only recreation possible. One day when he was quite far from shore, the wind suddenly died down and his boat was becalmed. Distressed by the hot rays of the August sun, he began to pray earnestly for a breeze. An hour passed, but he still drifted helplessly farther and farther from land. Presently he saw help coming toward him. An old fisherman, realizing his peril, came and towed his sailboat back to the harbor. McConkey says this taught him a real lesson about prayer. While his exact request had been denied, God had provided the needed deliverance in another way. The man He sent could chart a better course back to shore than McConkey could have done if the wind had just returned; for he did not know the way through the treacherous shoals from the place where he had drifted.

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

He does not lead me year by year
 Nor even day by day,
 But step by step my path unfolds;
 My Lord directs my way.
 Tomorrow's plans I do not know,
 I only know this minute;
 But He will say this is the way,
 By faith, go walk ye in it.

And I am glad that it is so,
 Today's enough to bear;
 And when tomorrow comes
 His grace shall far exceed its care.
 What need to worry then or fret,
 The God who gave His Son,
 Holds all my moments in His hand
 And gives them one by one.

What a man of prayer this great apostle was. We catch a little glimpse of his prayer life in the 10th verse when we read:

"night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith."

Martin Luther once said:

I have so much business to do today that I shall not be able to get through it with less than three hours in prayer.

It is our earnest prayer and desire as we contemplate this question in our SPIRITUAL CHECKUP that we will really recognize the tremendous potential that lies at our fingertips through simple access into the presence of our heavenly Father by means of prayer.

v.12 and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you;

PETITION #1 in verse 11 has to do with:

the DIRECTION of the apostle and his team to Thessalonica.

PETITION #2 has to do with:

the LOVE of the Thessalonian believers.

This could be translated: "But as for you, may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another and for all men."

Paul's prayer is:

- 1.they might "INCREASE,"
- 2.they might "ABOUND IN LOVE,"
- 3.and that this love would just not be limited to one another but that it might be "FOR ALL MEN."

It would be for those IN the family and for those OUT of the family.

Paul's 1ST PRAYER REQUEST in verse 11 is for direction to this city of Thessalonica by God.

Now his 2ND PRAYER REQUEST is for the Thessalonians themselves. It has to do with this matter of their "LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER" and for everyone, even as the apostles' love for them.

Paul will have more to say about this matter of "LOVE" in the 4th chapter, but his prayer now is 2-FOLD:

1.that they might "INCREASE IN LOVE,"

2.and "ABOUND IN LOVE."

The kind of "LOVE" Paul is talking about is not just a frothy, surface-type of love, but it is a love that is produced by the Spirit of God in our hearts.

This is the reason he prays that "THE LORD WILL CAUSE [them] TO INCREASE AND ABOUND IN [this] LOVE."

John 13:34, 35

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

Revelation 2:4

But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

The kind of love that Paul is talking about here is a love which is produced by the Spirit of God through our relationship with Jesus Christ. It is a love which is manifested in the life of Jesus Christ.

I have a friend called Jesus,
 Whose love is strong and true,
 And never fails how 'ere 'tis tried
 No matter what I do.
 I've sinned against this love of His;
 Then when I knelt to pray,
 Confessing all my guilt to Him,
 The sin clouds rolled away.

Sometimes the clouds of trouble
 Bedim the sky above.
 I cannot see my Savior's face,
 I doubt His wondrous love.
 But He from heaven's mercy seat,
 Beholding my despair,
 In pity bursts the clouds between
 And shows me He is there.

When sorrow's clouds o'ertake me
 And break up my head,
 When life seems worse than useless,
 And I were better dead;
 I take my grief to Jesus then,
 Nor do I go in vain,
 For heavenly hope He gives that cheers
 Like sunshine after rain.

Oh, I could sing forever
 Of Jesus' love divine,
 Of all His care and tenderness
 For this poor life of mine.
 His love is in and over all,
 And wind and waves obey,
 When Jesus whispers, "Peace, be still"
 And rolls the clouds away.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

These Thessalonians were noted for their love, but Paul prayed that it might abound. Genuine Christian love is one thing in the Christian life which cannot be carried to excess.

"Love overflowing its container" suggests that Christian love is something that wells up within a person naturally. It overflows to everyone, not just Christians in the church. Paul then says, his love was their model.

(Each Day a New Beginning. Hazelden Foundation)

. . . love is a great beautifier.

--Louisa May Alcott

5/3

Hendricksen puts verses 11 and 12 together by saying:

"As for ourselves, we ardently hope that God may direct our way to you; and (or but) as for you, whether or not God permits us to revisit you, may the Lord (that is, the Lord Jesus in closest possible connection with our God and Father) cause you to abound and overflow in love."

p. 91

Hogg and Vine say:

"You" precedes "Lord" in the original and has thus an EMPHATIC POSITION in the sentence. The meaning accordingly is, "Whatever God's will concerning our movements and service may be, we know this to be His will for you that you should learn how through love to be servants one to another."

William Barclay, in his Daily Study Bible, says:

John Buchan once described an atheist as a man who has no invisible means of support. And it may well be that our failure to live the Christian life is due to the fact that we have tried to live it without the help of God, and that is an impossible assignment.

Lange says:

Love should not be scanty, poor, but rich, exuberant. Love after God's kind embraces all. If thou lovest this man and that man not at all, this is nothing but a friendship after a human sort. We are beholden to God not only for the stock put into our hands at first but for the improvement of it also. The more we are beloved, the more loving we should be.

OUR GREATEST MINISTRY

While very ill, John Knox, the founder of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, called to his wife and said, "Read me that Scripture where I first cast my anchor." After he listened to the beautiful prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17, he seemed to forget his weakness. He began to pray, interceding earnestly for his fellowmen. He prayed for the ungodly who had thus far rejected the gospel. He pleaded in behalf of people who had been recently converted. And he requested protection for the Lord's servants, many of whom were facing persecution. As Knox prayed, his spirit went home to be with the Lord. The man of whom Queen Mary had said, "I fear his prayers more than I do the armies of my enemies," ministered through prayer until the moment of his death.

(From Infosearch 2.21)

(Why Christians Sin: Avoiding the Dangers of an Uncommitted Life by J. Kirk Johnston)

Henri Nouwen has said that

too many Christians think that prayer means to have spiritual thoughts. That's not it.

Prayer means to bring into the presence of God all that you are. You can say, "God, I hate this guy; I can't stand him."

The prayer of most people is too selective. They usually present only those things to God they want Him to know or think He can handle. But God can handle everything.

Christians need to just talk with their heavenly Father more. They might as well tell Him what they're thinking or feeling, because He knows already. They can't hide anything. They would enjoy praying and their relationship with God more if they would be open and honest, praying simple, heartfelt prayers rather than lengthy, sanitized ones.

Howard Hendricks in his book Taking A Stand told about a new Christian at his very first prayer meeting. He was very reluctant to pray because he couldn't pray like the older Christians. But finally with some encouragement he prayed, "Lord, this is Jim. I'm the one that met you last Thursday night. Forgive me, Lord, because I can't say it the way the rest of these people do, but I want to tell you the best I know how. I love you, Lord. Amen." As Hendricks recalled, "He ignited the prayer meeting. We had been doing a good job of scraping the Milky Way, but he prayed."

When believers don't pray naturally, simply talking with God, prayer becomes dull and unsatisfying. When they fail to pray specifically, frequently, and with persistence, they may doubt the effectiveness of prayer. Poor praying can destroy a relationship with God; and those who don't talk with God rarely talk with others about God.
pp. 136-37

Hannah Hurnard, in her book The Mountain of Spices, says:

When men love, they fulfill the law of their being. When they break the law of love, they disrupt and frustrate the very law of life. As long as they love, they are healthy and happy and harmonious. When they cease to love and begin to think envious, resentful, bitter, unforgiving and selfish thoughts; then they begin to destroy themselves, for every part of their being is then poisoned by unloving thoughts.

Paul's prayer in this verse is that the Lord will cause them to "INCREASE AND ABOUND" to the point of overflowing in love for each other and for everybody else--for God's love is no respecter of persons.

This love has been modeled for them in the apostle Paul and his team. The last phrase of the verse says:

"JUST AS WE ALSO DO FOR YOU."

Paul has already described his relationship to them as "a nursing mother," and as "a father," so he is using himself once again as an example of what is meant by this kind of love.

(Fire in Your Heart by Sammy Tippit)

Perhaps we have not come to grips with this truth because we are a generation of positive thinkers. We have positively thought ourselves to sleep in a bed of apathy. We must awaken! There are more people alive today than ever before, and most of them admittedly are without Jesus Christ. They are going to hell.
pp. 48-49

(Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life by
Barbara Johnson)

Do you know how you can tell if you are co-dependent? When you are dying, you see someone else's life pass before your eyes!
p. 122

On the back of the main door to the Joy Room is a huge sign with my favorite motto: "WHATEVER, LORD!" Beneath the sign sits a doll that looks like a little old lady, and she asks, "Dear God, if I give all my love away, can I have a refill?"
p. 119

v.13 so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness in the presence of our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

PETITION #1 in verse 11 has to do with DIRECTION.

PETITION #2 in verse 12 has to do with LOVE.

PETITION #3 in verse 13 has to do with "HOLINESS."

"SO THAT" speaks of the result of their increasing and abounding in love for one another and for all.

"SO THAT HE MAY ESTABLISH YOUR HEARTS BLAMELESS IN HOLINESS."

Again we have the word "MAY" for the 3rd time, indicating his recognition of the Father's sovereignty.

The Lord Jesus Christ recognized this as well when in the garden of Gethsemane He prayed:

"Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done."

Paul now in this 13th verse tells us why he prays that the Lord will increase their love. It is so that their hearts may be established:

"BLAMELESS IN HOLINESS IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR GOD AND FATHER."

Love will affect the way we live. In a marriage relationship we are separated unto our wives. I am separated unto Pearl.

2 Corinthians 6:17, 18

"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," says the Lord Almighty.

"SO THAT HE MAY ESTABLISH YOUR HEARTS."

The word for "ESTABLISH" is the word sterizo. We get our word "steroids" from it. The Thessalonians needed strengthening by God in their inner being.

1 Thessalonians 3:2

and we sent Timothy, our brother and fellow worker of God (God's helper) in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you concerning your faith;

PRACTICE HIS PRESENCE!

Dr. Andrew Bonar, a saintly man, wrote in his diary: "Tonight I gave myself to a time of waiting upon the Lord. I had not been much in the spirit of prayer, but now several things have become clear to me. I realize I have not communed enough with the Lord, nor come to Him as often as I should. Little forethought has been given to the requests I've made. There has been much conversing and outward engagement with men, but I have not been occupied enough with God himself. I also realize that a closeness to Him gives abundant strength and is like sunlight shining through the clouds on a gloomy day."

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

Hogg and Vine say:

Love is not an end in itself but a means to an end, and that end is holiness. The exercise of love toward others builds up one's own Christian character. The object of the gift of Christ in ministry is that each may be taught to speak in truth and to act in love, and that so the whole body may build itself up in that which characterizes its Head.

Hendricksen puts it this way:

The Lord by means of love strengthens the inner purposes and desires. Hearts thus strengthened will be less prone to crave the unseparated life, the life of the world. Rather, they will tend in the direction of the wholly separated life, so that, trusting entirely in Christ and in his redemption and having experienced the transforming influences of his Spirit, they will be blameless, in a state and condition of holiness, and this in the very presence of our God and Father, that is, before his judgment-seat.
p. 92

Barnhouse says:

Undoubtedly this verse is intended to prepare the hearts and minds of the readers for the upcoming text on the translation of the saints at the return of Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-18), for as the hymn puts it:

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
O may I then in Him be found
Dressed in His righteousness alone
Faultless to stand before the throne.

Lange says:

Establishment of the heart comes through growth and holiness, and this consists especially in love.

J. Vernon McGee says:

He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness. The desired end of their love for one another is that they would develop a character of holiness. If you were tried in court for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you? We are going to appear before Him someday and He is going to judge our works. This may terrify you but He also is going to judge our character as believers and determine the reward we will receive.

Boyce Blackwelder says:

Holiness is a matter of both the heart and the behavior. This is implied by the fact that in his prayer Paul mentions love and holiness together. The indispensable characteristics of the Christian life are unselfishness and moral purity.

Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians in chapter 5:23 is very similar to this verse:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely (through and through); and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 12:14

Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

I will turn My hands upon thy heart
And purge away thy dross.
I will refine thee in My fire,
Remake thee at My cross.

1 John 4:17 (Living Bible)

And as we live with Christ our love grows more perfect and complete; and so we will not be ashamed and embarrassed at the day of judgement but can face Him with confidence and joy because he loves us and we love him too.

2 Samuel 22:33

It is God who arms me with strength
and makes my way perfect.

Philippians 4:19

And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Paul did not pray that they would be sinless. That was impossible. He prayed that they would be blameless, that is, that after they sinned they would deal with it as God requires and so be free from any reasonable charge by their fellowmen.

"HOLINESS" here means "to be separated to God in their hearts and habits."

Hogg and Vine say:

The sentence may be paraphrased thus: The Lord enable you more and more to spend your lives in the interest of others in order that He may so establish you in Christian character now that you may be vindicated from every charge that might possibly be brought against you at the judgment seat of God.

Walvoord says:

Paul accordingly prayed that God might perfect that which was lacking in these Thessalonian Christians. Their faith needed to be enlarged. Their lives were not complete in their spiritual experience. Paul wanted God to deal with them and to bring them on to that further step of perfection. Nowhere in the Bible is the word perfect used to mean sinlessly perfect. In fact, that is not the idea at all. There is need for another word in English into which we can translate these words because the word perfection in the ordinary sense is not exactly the idea. It is only the thought of completion or attainment but not the idea of sinless perfection. Paul is praying that the Thessalonians might be complete and in the end might stand unblamable in holiness before God.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Christ alone is the immediate source of growth and love.

Stedman says:

"Unblamable" does not mean sinless as we have already seen. Unblamable means dealing with what is wrong, not covering it up or pretending it is not there. The Thessalonian Christians dealt with sin in their hearts with the spiritual resources provided by God, and thus, were able to turn from evil and walk closer and closer with the Father.

(The Good Shepherd by Haddon W. Robinson)

David asserts that because the Lord is his Shepherd, he will not want for guidance because "He leads me in the right paths." When God leads us in the right paths He not only directs us to the right places, but He leads us to the right kind of life. When it comes to making decisions we often want to know only where God wants us--whether Dallas or Chicago, Africa or South America. But God's leading is not so much to a place as to a righteous life and character.

p. 17

After I discovered that God's guidance has to do with what I am, not where I am, I realized that if I was what God wanted me to be, He would then place me where He wanted me. As long as I was walking with Him, and allowing His Spirit to live through me, I did not have to be plagued by decisions. I could trust these things into the hands of God, knowing that He would lead me to the place of His choosing.

p. 18

Notice how verse 4 is related to verse 3. In verse 3 the psalmist declares, "He leads me in the right paths for His name's sake." Then, verse 4 is saying, "But one of the paths through which the Shepherd takes the sheep is the ravine of deep darkness."

p. 19

Paul is saying that whatever happens, whether I come to you or not, it is our prayer that you will "increase and abound in love for one another and for all men, just as we also do for you."

The result of that will be that:

"YOUR HEARTS WILL BE ESTABLISHED BLAMELESS IN HOLINESS."

The more you love the more you are set apart.

Recognize that all of this work in your hearts is the work of God and not of men.

Jude 24, 25

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

"SO THAT HE MAY ESTABLISH YOUR HEARTS BLAMELESS IN HOLINESS IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR GOD AND FATHER AT THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS WITH ALL HIS SAINTS."

Here Paul once again concludes a chapter in this epistle with reference to the COMING OF CHRIST.

What a blessed event that is going to be!

Walvoord says:

The coming of the Lord is mentioned again in verse 13. In Thessalonians every chapter deals with the Lord's coming. The last verse of chapter one dealt with waiting for the Lord's return. Chapter 2 spoke of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming in verse 19. The last verse of chapter 3 deals once again with the coming of the Lord.

We need once again to remind ourselves that everything that we are reading in these 3 PETITIONS is something that God is going to do:

- 1.He is going to "direct our way to you,"
- 2.He is going to "cause you to increase and abound in love for one another and for all men,"
- 3.and He is going to "establish and strengthen your hearts blameless in holiness in the presence of our God and Father."

Walvoord says:

Some may recall how H. A. Ironside, that great expositor of scripture, in his early years struggled with the problem of holiness, seeking earnestly an experience of complete sanctification. The story is told in his book Holiness: the False and the True in which he says he thought he had to be completely holy in order to be saved. Accordingly, he would have some experience and would believe he was saved and completely sanctified. He would go on for a week or two and then suddenly be aware that he was not perfect after all. Then he came to the conclusion that he was not saved. So he would do the whole thing over again. In this difficulty he discovered Hebrews 12:14 where he read: "Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." He reasoned correctly that when one "follows" he has not attained but that it will be attained when we see the Lord.

Paul recognized the fact that "HOLINESS" would be complete when we are with Him.

1 John 3:2, 3

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

1 John 2:28

And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

Stedman says:

I have observed that many Christians pray that God will prevent certain things from happening whether it be injury, death, suffering or heartache. Unfortunately, there are people who teach that we have a right to be spared all trouble but the New Testament shows us that afflictions are needed in our lives. God does sometimes grant our requests and remove problems. And it is not wrong to pray in this way if we also understand that He has perfect freedom to say no but He prefers that we pray not for negative things to be prevented but that they be used to grow us up into Christ.

Isaiah 48:10, 11

See, I have refined you, though not as silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.
For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this.
How can I let myself be defamed?
I will not yield my glory to another.

Spurgeon received a copy of Andrew Bonar's commentary on Leviticus. It so blessed him that he returned it saying, "Dr. Bonar, please place herein your autograph and your photograph." The book was returned to him with the following note from the pen of Dr. Bonar. "Dear Spurgeon, here's the book with my autograph and with my photograph. If you had been willing to wait a short season you could have had a better likeness for I shall be like Him for I shall see Him as he is."

We cannot work up love. God produces that by the power of His Spirit in us. It is the fruitage of the Spirit's presence within us. The Lord is the One who does it. It is the Lord who uses stress and difficult circumstances and persecution that He might "strengthen and establish our hearts" in the path of "holiness."

"SO THAT HE MAY ESTABLISH YOUR HEARTS BLAMELESS IN HOLINESS IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR GOD AND FATHER AT THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS WITH ALL HIS SAINTS."

J. Vernon McGee says:

Therefore "at the coming of our Lord Jesus" refers to the fact that believers are going to be present with the Lord Jesus at the very moment that we are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. He will take us home to glory to the place that He has prepared for us; so that this coming does not refer to the return of the Lord with His saints to establish His kingdom but to our coming to heaven into the presence of the Father.

We have the same thought in 1 Thessalonians 2:19: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" We will come into the presence of the Lord Jesus and at that time will be presented unblamable in holiness before God.

Walvoord says it this way:

According to scripture, Christians are going to meet Christ in the air. We are going to be present with Him at that moment. After we meet Him in the air, He will take us home to glory to be in the presence of the Father and the holy angels. After that we are coming back to the earth with Christ. This word "coming" here may not refer specifically to the coming of Christ with His saints to the earth but rather the coming to heaven when they will be in the presence of the Father. That is the same thought considered in 2:19: "In the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming"--literally, "before our Lord Jesus Christ in His presence." In chapter 3:13 the verse translated literally reads "before God even our Father in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. There is a coming to the earth but there is also the coming to heaven. What an event that arrival in heaven is going to be. All the holy angels will be in attendance on that day. When the dead in Christ and the living Christians are caught up to be with the Lord and arrive in heaven as the trophies of grace, the marvels of God's resurrection power, they will be presented as a spotless bride, as a holy people, as those who are the workmanship of Christ.

This wonderful thought reminds me of the old negro spiritual that the kids used to sing when we would get back to Bremerton from one of our youth retreats. They would roll down the windows on the bus as we were coming into town and start to sing at the top of their voices:

O, when the saints go marching in.
 O when the saints go marching in.
 O, Lord, I want to be in that number
 When the saints go marching in.

Dr. Harold Carlson tells the story of a pastor who was speaking at a camp a number of summers ago:

The afternoon recreational period was just over and the pastor was sitting on the shore preparing his thoughts for the evening Bible hour. Out on the lake all of a sudden he saw a struggling form in the water. Quickly he stripped down and began swimming toward this struggling form. When he arrived at the place, the person had already sunk to the bottom. The pastor immediately began to search and pulled the young girl to shore whereupon he cried for help. A resuscitator soon was brought and the young lady lived.

A number of years later the pastor tells of the wedding which he had in his church. What a beautiful wedding it was. Everything was in place and the candlelighters had already lighted the candles and the male part of the party was already on the platform. Down the aisle came the bridesmaids, maid of honor and then this beautiful bride. The service was performed, the pastor had just introduced them as Mr. and Mrs. and the bridal party was making its exit when the bride stopped and left the arm of her new husband. She came to embrace the pastor and with tears flowing down her cheeks, she simply said "Thank you making this moment possible."

What a joy it will be in the presence of the Lord one day as we see Him face to face, to simply say, "Thank You for making this moment possible."

If He should come today
 And find my hands so full
 Of future plans however fair
 In which my Savior has no share,
 What would He say?

If He should come today
 And find my love so cold,
 My faith so very weak and dim,
 I had not even looked for Him,
 What would He say?

If He should come today
 And find I had not told one soul
 About my heavenly Father
 Whose blessings all my way attend,
 What would He say?

If He should come today,
 Would I be glad, quite glad
 Remembering He had died for all
 And none through me had heard His call,
 What would He say?

Paul has prayed for 3 THINGS:

1. DIRECTION
2. LOVE
3. HOLINESS

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said:

You have no place in which to pour your troubles except into the ear of God. If you tell them to your friends you but put your troubles out for a moment and they will return again. Roll your burden onto the Lord through prayer and you have rolled it into the great deep out of which it will never by any possibility rise. Cast your trouble where you cast your sins. You've cast your sins into the depths of the sea. There cast your troubles also. Never keep a trouble half an hour before you tell it to God in prayer. As soon as the trouble comes, quick, the first thing, tell it to your Father in prayer.

William Carey the great missionary said:

Expect great things from God, and attempt great things for God.

Dr. Henrietta Mears, after a long and fruitful ministry, frequently stated:

If I had my life to live over again I would just believe God.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: When we come to God in prayer we must recognize His sovereignty.

LESSON #2: The Father's purpose, plan and program for us might be quite different than we think, and therefore it is our place to submit and to surrender.

LESSON #3: The Lord has promised to direct our steps in the path of His choosing. His path is revealed by prayer.

LESSON #4: Growing and increasing in our capacity for love is a lifetime experience with our Lord.

LESSON #5: It is the Lord who produces His love in us.

LESSON #6: We are to love those who are IN the family and those who are OUT of the family.

LESSON #7: It is the Lord who will strengthen and establish us.

LESSON #8: We will stand spotless before His throne because of His work in our lives.

LESSON #9: Are you going to be there "when the saints go marching in"?

LESSON #10: How is your prayer life?

WHAT TO DO IN A CRISIS

The great preacher F. B. Meyer gave some sound advice on what to do in a crisis. He wrote, "Never act in panic, nor allow man to dictate to you; calm yourself and be still; force yourself into the quiet of your closet until the pulse beats normally and the scare has ceased to disturb. When you are most eager to act is the time when you will make the most pitiable mistakes. Do not say in your heart what you will or will not do, but wait upon God until he makes known His way. So long as that way is hidden, it is clear that there is no need of action, and that He accounts Himself responsible for all results of keeping you where you are."

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

A prominent individual recently said that his little daughter often supplements her usual evening prayer with many requests for special favors from the Lord. However, one night--as a sweet afterthought--she closed with the words, "And now, God, what can I do for You?"

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

Some years ago the Chinese missionary Watchman Nee had taken a young convert by the name of Brother Wu on a preaching visit to an island just off the South China coast. Though laboring faithfully the two found little response from the people and began to wonder why.

One morning while outside preaching Brother Wu asked publicly, "Why will none of you believe?"

Someone in the crowd replied "We have a god, one god Tawang, and he has never failed us."

"How do you know he has never failed you?" asked Wu.

"We have held his festival procession every January for 286 years, and every year without fail his day is perfect without rain or cloud," was the reply.

After learning that the festival was scheduled for January 11 at 8:00 in the morning, Wu said impetuously, "It will certainly rain on the 11th at 8 this year.

Responding with cries, the people said, "If there is rain at that time this year Wu's God will become our God."

Watchman Nee and Brother Wu immediately committed themselves to prayer, claiming knowledge of the God of Elijah. A whole village's fate depended upon the faithfulness of God.

At the breakfast table on the appointed morning as grace was offered for food there was also thanksgiving for the rain to come. Moments later at 8:00 on the dot rain came down. Shouts from the children were first heard, "There is God. There is no more Tawang!"

Was this a miracle? Yes, the miracle of faith.

Alfred Lord Tennyson has said:

There is a place where thou canst touch
 the eyes of blinded men to instant perfect sight. There is a place where thou canst
 say
 arise to dying captives bound in chains of night. There is a place where thou canst
 reach
 a store of hoarded gold and free it for the Lord. There is a place upon some distant
 shore
 where thou canst send a worker and the Word.
 Where is that secret place? Dost thou ask where?
 Soul, it is the secret place of prayer.

STUDY #6 - 1 Thessalonians

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: When we come to God in prayer we must recognize His sovereignty.

LESSON #2: The Father's purpose, plan and program for us might be quite different than we think, and therefore it is our place to submit and to surrender.

LESSON #3: The Lord has promised to direct our steps in the path of His choosing. His path is revealed by prayer.

LESSON #4: Growing and increasing in our capacity for love is a lifetime experience with our Lord.

LESSON #5: It is the Lord who produces His love in us.

LESSON #6: We are to love those who are IN the family and those who are OUT of the family.

LESSON #7: It is the Lord who will strengthen and establish us.

LESSON #8: We will stand spotless before His throne because of His work in our lives.

LESSON #9: Are you going to be there "when the saints go marching in"?

LESSON #10: How is your prayer life?