

A Practical Study of 1 Thessalonians

Delighting The Heart of God “Learning to Bring Pleasure to God”

Question Number Six – How Is Your Prayer Life? – 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

There are lots of little stories about prayer so when you begin to talk on the subject you don't have too much trouble finding one. I thought this one was so great.

This one came from Swindoll's book *Simple Faith*. I could really identify with this story.

(*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. MAMA IWANTSOMETICTACS!!!**”

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

And such is the case. We’re taught to persevere.

Somebody said:

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

(source unknown)

Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it this way:

(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 imagine 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

Probably if you've read any of the great biographies of men who've gone on to glory, you've noticed one common denominator about them. And that is, they were great men of prayer.

One of the things that really impressed me about George Mueller was the fact that he could pray with such fantastic faith, even in the midst of all kinds of adversity.

He was famous as you know for caring for hundreds and hundreds of orphan children. The greatest story about him and prayer was one morning he was thanking the Lord for the

food that they were going to have at breakfast and it hadn't been delivered yet. And after he had said Amen, there was a knock on the door and the food was delivered.

Those are the kinds of things that thrill your heart but we know so little of it today as we endeavor to try to understand why it is that God works so little among us.

In our Spiritual Check-up we've asked 5 questions to this point:

1. Did you make the right start?
2. Are you a phony?
3. Has Satan hindered you?
4. Are you discouraged by the problems?

And then last time, we took kind of a positive look and we talked about:

5. Are you an encouragement to others in your walk with the Lord?

Now in your Spiritual Check-up we're going to talk about **PRAYER**.

We're going to ask ourselves the question:

How's your prayer life?

There're just three verses in today's study. And there are **THREE PETITIONS**.

Paul prays at the first of the letter, he prays here in the middle of the letter, and then he's going to pray at the end of the letter.

Let me just ask some personal questions right now for you to allow the Spirit of God to probe your heart as you listen to the apostle pray in our study:

1. How much do we really pray?

Now if that could be flashed on the screen, would you be comfortable? Because it will probably be in your computer print-out at the Judgment Seat of Christ as to the number of years you lived and the amount of time you took to spend alone deepening your relationship with the Lord.

Secondly:

2. How consistent are you in prayer?

How much time goes on between sessions of prayer with your Lord?

Third:

3. How much do you really believe that God will undertake in your behalf when you lay these burdens and anxieties and concerns before Him?

These questions can only be answered by you individually and I'm not in the business of embarrassing anyone. I'm asking myself these same questions along with you.

John 16:24 is the second verse I have new converts memorize.

John 16:24

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

Clarence MaCartney tells a story that's kind of humorous about two men who were walking in a field one day and 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.'"

(From InfoSearch 2.21)

You know, you can identify sometimes with some of the prayers that are shot up at critical times.

Now, let's look at the last verse that we shared together last time in chapter 3 verse 10 to set the stage for the prayer we're looking at.

Now remember chapter 3 verse 10 is the **KEY VERSE** to the book.

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?

You see, this man did not just shoot up a little prayer every once in a while when there was a need. You sense agony here. You sense intensity. You sense vibrance. You sense an intercessor as he's laying hold of God. And it didn't just happen once in a while. It was a "night and day" proposition. He was continually before the Lord with his concerns. It was a man, a man characterized by communion.

Now we know that he prayed "night and day...earnestly" to see their face and God said "No! but you can send them a letter. In fact, you can send them two. But you'll never probably see their face as far as we know."

Now all verses 11-13 do is amplify what you read there in

verse 10.

The little word “may” occurs **THREE TIMES** in these verses. And that’s your **KEY WORD**.

“May” indicates a new petition. There are **THREE PETITIONS** in this prayer.

Verse 11:

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

This is the **KEY VERSE** to the study.

Paul starts the letter in prayer back in chapter 1 verses 2 and 3. He stops here to pray in the middle of the letter. And then as we come to our last session we’ll see one final prayer at the end of the epistle.

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

Now let’s just reflect before the Father for a minute.

This is our **KEY VERSE**.

1. How much time do we spend?

Is that enough?

Would that be enough for you and your husband or your mate or your friend to really get to know each other?

2. What are the things that you pray for?

Are they mostly for you? Or have you found the joy of intercessory ministry for others?

3. Are worship and praise a part of your prayer life?

Do you worship and adore Him?

Do you praise Him? Do you take down the hymnal? Do you sing to Him?

Do you give Him great joy by demonstrating your adoration of His person?

Now maybe you're saying "But Don it seems kind of weird. I feel like I'm talking to myself and the prayers hit the ceiling and I never really get anything I ask for."

Well you've revealed a deeper problem. And that's not God's fault.

Communication has been broken because of some problems.

There has been some mechanical difficulties. And let me tell you, they're not on the other end.

If you ever have a busy signal when you're talking to the Father, it's probably good to dial 1 John 1:9. That always gets through.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

There's some offense in your life. There's some sin. And you say, well where do you get that?

Well listen to Psalm 66:18:

Psalm 66:18-19

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.

In other words, if I guard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

Now that's also verified in:

Isaiah 59:1, 2

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save,
or 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.

Bill Hybels wrote a little article for *Campus Life* magazine back in late '89 on unanswered prayer. And he says this—these are the causes of unanswered prayer:

1. not praying—that's obvious,
2. unconfessed sin,
3. broken relationships,

And of course here he's using 1 Peter 3:7 where the prayers of the husband can be hindered when he's out of fellowship with his wife.

4. selfishness,

And that's:

James 4:4

You adulterers and adulteresses know you not the friendship with the world is enmity with God? You have not because you ask not, and when you ask you ask to

consume it on your own desires. And therefore you ask amiss.

And then an:

5. uncaring attitude,

And then his last one is:

6. inadequate faith.

That is to trust and to believe that God will really answer your prayers.

(Key points taken from “No answers” by Bill Hybels. *Campus Life*, Sept 1989. p. 40

“Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you;”

Don't you love that? What is it about this very first petition that you really like? Maybe you hadn't thought of it but I'll tell you what gives me warm fuzzies about. It's recognition of the sovereignty of God.

You see, he's not telling God that he's going to Thessalonica and he wants and he's got great faith that the Lord's going to bless him in Thessalonica and he's going to accomplish all this great task in the lives of these Thessalonians. He uses the word “may...may...may.”

It's a recognition of God's sovereignty. And when you realize that and you're coming to the God of the universe, it makes you fall on your face with a right attitude in prayer in making your petition and request before one who would find joy in granting it, but He can also deny it.

He can say "No, not now."

He could say "Yes, and here's more."

Or He could say "Wait. It's not time."

All of these things are possibilities when you come to a sovereign God, but we must come with a little word "may." And that doesn't mean that we're coming to Him in unbelief. We come with a recognition of His sovereignty.

John MacArthur has a book called *Charismatic Chaos*. And this book demonstrates why there is such a tremendous problem and such a big area of difference in theological orientation between we who recognize the sovereignty of God and they who don't. I mean, you've just got to make it the bottom line, this movement. This health-wealth-prosperity movement does not have any place in its theology for the sovereignty of God. They don't come saying "may." They come saying "I believe You're going to do it and therefore by faith You're going to do it so do it."

Now listen to these statements:

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

Note that both Price and Tilton [of course we know him in Dallas] 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.

[I think that guy’s ignorant of what the New Testament teaches because I find it there.]

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.”

p. 287

And so on and on he goes demonstrating with author and writer and charismatic leader one after another. You can't say "if it be your will" and then on the other side of your mouth demanding that God act.

David Hubbard said this:

(Healing and Holiness by Samuel C. Storms)

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

It's worth the price of that book.

Paul's first request:

"Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you;"

If I put that in laymen's terminology he's just saying "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 direct your path.

Psalm 37:23 and 24—the Lord delights in a man’s way:

Psalm 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.

Psalm 32:8

I will instruct you and teach you in the
way you should go;
I will guide you with my eye.

Isaiah 30:21

When you turn to the right and to the left, your ears will
hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk ye
in it.”

These men were LED by God. And they were led by God
because they were men who PRAYED.

And always remember this:

When God answers “no” to your prayer it always obligates Him to a better plan.

And that’ll always come out when you quit resisting and you accept the “no” as a part and parcel of a greater purpose that He has in mind that you know nothing of.

You know how sometimes some writers can just in a paragraph unlock the whole thing? Well I’m looking forward to glory when I get to meet Ole Hallesby. He is a great old Norwegian theologian. And when he said...he summarized it all this way—he 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)

You know, now that’s a prayer that I can live with. That’s a prayer that recognizes God’s sovereignty and that it’s His glory that’s at stake not some man who’s trying to manipulate a greater power to accomplish some selfish purpose. He sees God’s glory behind it all and he’s willing to submit to that divine authority.

Over and over again in the scripture we see verses like this:

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.

There was a young lady who handed me a piece of poetry that was in the front of her Bible that she had carried there for a number of years. And I've gotten to the place where when it comes to God's direction, I remember this kind of little prayer:

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.

(Written by Barbara C. Ryberg. Original source unknown)

God does direct His children.

In his first prayer request is for the accomplishment of the thing that he wants the most:

because he's been made an orphan,

because he's like a father,

because he's like a nursing mother.

Because he has such intense love for them he wants to come. And his earnest request of a Sovereign God is please “direct our way to [them].”

And therefore he provides for us a great example of how we ought to pray about circumstances and situations in our own lives, least we make mistakes and get way out in left field.

Prayer number two—verse 12.

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;

Now his second prayer has to do with LOVE. And he realizes that love for the believer is not a static thing. You don't reach

a certain level of love or capacity for love in your life and then you have reached it.

It is a greater and greater capacity that can be provided for the believer as he grows and matures in his faith. And as he gets closer and closer to the Lord, there's a great intensity of "love for one another" as brothers and sisters, but also "for all men"—those who are lost and dying without Jesus Christ.

And then he adds a little attachment to it:

“just as we also do for you.”

I mean, do we love you? We really do! But his prayer is that they might increase—they might “abound” in this love.

Obviously one of the big problems that they had in Thessalonica was being able to melt together into a oneness after such a brief time together—for them—and then out of that love could come a love for fellow Thessalonians and the church could continue to grow and to mature and to develop.

And it's so, it's such a vital and important part that Jesus—when he talks to the church at Ephesus in the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3—he says to the church at Ephesus “You know there's only one thing I've got against you. You've left your first love.”

You see we don't have a tendency too many times to magnify that which the Lord prioritizes as number one.

You know maybe you're in a flock of believers right now where there isn't very much love. Well I can also tell you something else, the Spirit isn't working. You know, where there is a deep growing intensity of love for one another and a growing and intensity of love for the Lord and for the lost, those are the places the Lord chooses to grace. And those are the places the Lord chooses to bring about blessing.

And Paul knows that. So his second prayer is "Hey look—love!"

John 13:34 and 35—I'll never get over this. Just after Judas kicks him in the teeth and betrays him and walks out of the Upper Room, Jesus has every reason to say "well I'm going to change my regulations about love because I've loved Judas for three years and look what it got me." He turns right around and he says:

John 13:34, 35

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

It is a top priority—an important issue. And so Paul makes that his second prayer request right here in the middle of the epistle.

Now the word "abounding" is the word for "overflowing the

container.”

It’s like Jesus said in John chapter 7 when He was talking about the presence of the Holy Spirit. He says:

John 7:38

...out of your innermost being flows rivers of living water

It’s more than you need. It is love that is overflowing the bucket. It’s overflowing and has consumed the container.

I love the way Howard Hendricks describes a young believer as he tries to express one of his first prayers in public with a group of other men. He said:

(Taking a Stand by Howard Hendricks)

“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.”

(page unknown)

And while the rest of them were scraping the galaxies and praying with great theological terminology, this dear guy steps forward and just says “Lord I love You and I want You to know I do. And I express it to you in these simple and plain words.”

Hannah Hurnard has written a book called *Mountain of Spices*. She has written *Hind's Feet on High Places*, which is a classic that's going to fall alongside *Pilgrim's Progress*.

And she's also written *Mountain of Spices*, which is on the fruit of the Spirit. And those two—to my way of thinking—are her best works.

When she's talking on love she says:

(The Mountain of Spices by Hannah Hurnard)

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 says "abound in love." I'm praying that you will, that you will overflow in it.

Sammy Tippit wrote a little book called *Fire in the Heart*. He's had a fabulous ministry in Eastern Europe.

(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

And he's calling with a clarion call for us to rise up and manifest the fruit of the Spirit of love in our lives!

Now you say "And I'm getting worn out!"

Like one dear old lady prayed, she said: "Dear God, if I give all my love away, can I come for a refill?" You know, it's like you just get to that point where, you know, how much more can I love? And how much more can I give?

Barbara Johnson says, this is how you can tell:

(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

We all know that! You're tired aren't you? You've been weary of loving. You've given and you've given and you've given. And maybe this is time to refuel the tanks. This is a time for you to be away like this. To realize and clarify your perspective and be filled with a fresh new love, you're ready to go down that

hill to meet the demands of ministry that's there before you.

May God help you in these days to experience that! Realize that these first two prayer requests are vital issues in your life where you are today. And more than how much time do you pray, recognize Paul's praying for really three things that you really need.

Maybe you need direction right now, in your life, in some specific areas.

Maybe you say "I am empty and I need a refill on love!"

But more even than that, maybe you're saying "Boy God, I'm not very holy." And his prayer—his final prayer—is for holiness. Look at that.

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.

Every one of the chapters ends speaking about that coming of Christ. And here again he says "may your hearts be established blameless in holiness in His presence."

Notice the little word "may" again—so there's your third request.

Petition #1 in verse 11 had to do with DIRECTION.

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

Petition #3 in verse 13 has to do with HOLINESS.

What a beautiful prayer and how relevant to the twentieth century!

Are these not the greatest needs you bring to this mountain?

For DIRECTION, for LOVE, and for a pursuit of HOLINESS that will actually demand respect by those who see you in the valley because you really are walking with the Lord.

Now the apostle Paul recognized the fact that God is sovereign and so he uses the little word “may...may...may.”

You see, love will always affect the way we live.

In a marriage relationship, we are separated unto our wives. We are separated to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ. And His primary objective in our lives is holiness.

2 Corinthians 6:17, 18

“Come out from their midst and be separated,” says the Lord. “Don’t touch what is unclean; and I’ll welcome you. I’ll be a father to you, and you shall become sons and daughters to Me,” says the Lord Almighty.

Now let’s just take a little bit closer look at the thirteenth

verse as we prepare to finish this study.

“so that He may”—WHAT?—“establish your hearts...”

Do you know what the Greek word is? That’s the Greek word *stērizō*.

When we think of steroids, what do we think? We think of strength.

So you could say this is “may He strengthen your hearts in holiness.” May He form a foundation so that you’re able to stand.

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)

And so he's honestly saying "I'm practicing His presence. I'm spending time with Him because I've allowed distance to come between."

2 Samuel 22:33

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

Philippians 4:19

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

Paul says:

"Whatever happens, whether I come to you or not, I want you to increase in love. But I also want something else to happen. I want your hearts to be established, blameless in holiness."

The more you love, the more you're set apart.

Paul concludes this wonderful prayer with "so may He establish your hearts blameless in holiness in the presence of our Lord."

Now, let's think about that for a minute.

Where does this prayer find you? Which one of those three things is the Spirit of God talking to you about right now?

Is it a need for DIRECTION that you're brought here? And maybe you're seeking His face afresh with regard to that.

Maybe it's LOVE? Maybe it's the fact that you've kind of grown cold. The demands of ministry have really gotten to you.

Or maybe this is a time for the roots to go down deep and to establish yourself in certain areas of HOLINESS where you have been so shallow. And you're coming and naming a holy God but you're really not spending time close enough to Him to become the holy kind of person that He really longs for you to become.

You know, all of these can be part and parcel of your life.

1. 1 John 3:2, 3
2. 1 John 2:28

And so the spirit of God can be at work at this moment.

You know I was reading a story one day by Dr. Harold Carlson who is a pastor at Lakewood Baptist in Lakewood, California for a number of years. And then was in a Edina, Minnesota. But he tells a story:

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 candle lighters 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." (source unknown)

You know:

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?

(source unknown)

Paul prays for three things:

1. DIRECTION,
2. LOVE, and
3. HOLINESS.

William Carey said:

Expect great things from God, and attempt great things for

God.
(source unknown)

Henrietta Mears, who touched so many lives in her long and fruitful ministry—the names of the people that she had an impact on is like Hebrews chapter 11. Because in that group is Bill Bright and Campus Crusade. And in that group is Billy Graham and the millions of people that he's touched. Came from the fervent faith of this dear lady and she said this as her life came to a close:

If I had my life to live over again I would just believe God.
(source unknown)

Now there are ten lessons. Let me share them and they'll be here for you in the front.

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

That's a vital part.

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?

You know, Jude ends with that glorious benediction:

Jude 24, 25

Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forevermore.

You know F. B. Meyer capsulized all of it in just a little statement that I had under the glass on my desk for a number

of years in my early ministry when I had glass on my desk. And this is what 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 pitiful 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)

There was a prominent individual who told the story of his little daughter who often supplemented her evening prayer with special favors from the Lord. However, one night she changed it. And with a sweet afterthought she closed her time of prayer with these words: “And now, God, what can I do for You?”

(From InfoSearch 2.21, paraphrased)

You know, what is it that I can give to You for all that You give to me?

Father, we thank You for the fact that we can talk about such personal areas of our lives. And thank You that Paul in this little capsule prayer of three verses in the middle of this great

epistle stops to deal with the three things that we probably have brought up the hill. Direction, love and holiness. And Father we know as we throw that in reverse, and we demonstrate the holy life, Your love is going to super-abound and overflow and we're going to be sensitive to Your direction. And I pray that You'll teach us how to lay hold of that. And if we're stressed out by some things that are really bothering us things that seem to make our lives so out of control, we will come back once again and truly intercede—truly spend time communing here with You in this wonderful place where we can sense so much of Your presence. Not only in the people and the staff, but in this very place that you've created for us to be away for this time. Speak Lord for Your servant heareth. Father, give us time to be still and to know that You're God and that You'll do some deep and significant work in each of these dear lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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A Practical Study of 1 THESSALONIANS: Your Spiritual Checkup

“Victory in Areas of Vulnerability”

Key verse 3:10 — *“night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith”*

QUESTION NUMBER SIX – HOW IS YOUR PRAYER LIFE? – 1 THESSALONIANS 3:11-13

KEY VERSE 3:11

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.

NOTES

QUESTIONS:

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. For what does Paul pray in verse 11?

3. What is the content of his prayer in verse 12?

4. Why does Paul pray the way he does, according to verse 13?

5. According to 1 John 3:2 what is going to happen when the Lord Jesus comes again?

6. How is your personal prayer life? How much do you pray? How often do you pray? What are the concerns for which you pray?

7. Do you pray often or only when you have problems that you cannot handle?

8. According to John 16:24 what has the Lord promised to us? Look up some other prayer promises in the Word so you can share them.

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons 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.

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