







Prayer and a holy life go together.  
(source unknown)

Why do we have and why are we saturated in the modern church with so many shallow Christians? Those who know so little of the depth of holiness and a walk with God?

Basically, we have to come back to the bottom line. They pray so little.

Now we're pursuing the subject of "Delighting the Heart of God." And one of the ways we can be assured that we're delighting the heart of God is that we're:

Spending time regularly in PRAYER.

Schedule prayer time. Make it an appointment with the King of kings. Be ready to meet Him and to talk with Him.

Here's verse 15, which was our last verse in the previous study:

### 2 Thessalonians 2:15

So then, brethren, be standing firm and be holding fast to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word [of mouth] or by letter from us.

He wants them, in their suffering, to be "standing firm" and to

be “holding fast to the traditions which you were taught.”

That’s a funny thing about the study of the Word of God, we get new insights every time we teach and begin to share.

Let’s say, just for the sake of an illustration, these people in Thessalonica they’re wonderful Christians. A number of them have died from persecution. Some of them are sick, some of them are very near death, some of them suffering very severely.

What would we pray for them if we got the word that everybody wants us to pray for the Thessalonian Christians? What is it that would immediately be on our prayer list?

1. We’d be praying for the alleviating of suffering, and
2. We’d be praying for those who are hurt and suffering, that they might be healed and be helped.

Right? After all, isn’t that the way we pray for each other? When we make a prayer request we say: “Oh, I’m sick” or “I have cancer” or “I have this” or “I have that”:

“Would you pray for me, that I’d be healed?”

And that’s a legitimate request.

Or “My husband lost his job. Would you pray that he gets a job?”

Or “I really don’t like this church I’m in or these circumstances I’m in and I’m contemplating a change. Would you pray that we’d make the right change?”

With that thought in mind—Paul loves these Christians (we’ve already learned that). He’s been with them three weeks, they’re brand new believers, he cares for them. He cares for them so much he wrote 1 Thessalonians to supply what was lacking in their faith, and now he’s writing 2 Thessalonians.

In every one of the prayers that he prays, he does not pray for any of those things. Why? Because God is sovereign and He ordered the curriculum around him so he’s not going to tell God to take them out of those circumstances that they’re in because God’s teaching them some things in those circumstances and he doesn’t pray that way. Nor does he pray specifically that they would be healed or any of that.

What he prays for in this, and it’s so beautiful when we see it here in these verses, is that they’ll have strength and encouragement in the midst of it.

See how different that is from our prayers? And yet that’s a biblical prayer. Because we’ve already learned that God is sovereign. God controls all the events of our lives. Yes, He does! And so who are we to know what kind of a curriculum He’s designed for our lives?

So we pray and we SEEK God's face for ENCOURAGEMENT and for STRENGTH for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are going through these kind of things.

Think about the difference between the prayers that we pray and the prayers that Paul prays. This prayer now is right in the middle of the letter and it's for these dear people who are really hurting.

Let's get into it! It's exciting!

The first two verses are the KEY VERSES to this study.

**v. 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and who gave us eternal encouragement and good hope by grace,**

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and who gave us eternal encouragement and good hope by grace,”

Now, in a study of any prayer in the New Testament, we always want to look for one little KEY WORD. And that little key word is the word “MAY.”

Meditate on just that one word:

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father...”

What does that tell us? That little word tells us that his

prayer is a request. And it also tells us that he recognizes that he is talking to a sovereign God who knows better than we do what needs to be done.

Much of the praying that we hear today is commanding God to do something under the pretense of exercising faith. And we don't ever see Paul doing that.

And that is NOT biblical praying. Over and over again we're going to see Paul praying and he'll always use the word "may."

It's "may You do this" and "may You do that."

We're coming to a God who knows all things well, He loves us eternally, He cares for us, and we're making a request. "We're coming to You seeking Your face." That little word "may" will just jump out of the text every time and it teaches us that God is sovereign and He's in control. And we come expressing a wish, a desire. And when we come that way, then what's God's option?

He can either leave the circumstances the way they are, and in the midst of it, give us the grace to go through it. Or He can change the circumstances because that's in our best interest and in His, and is aligned with His program and purpose too. See what we're saying?

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father"—what has He done?—"who loved us and who gave us" TWO THINGS.



“...who loved us”—first of all. Does that remind us of anything?

That reminds us of John 3:16, doesn't it?

“For God so loved the world”—what did He do?—“that He gave...”

There it is.

He “loved us” and He “gave.” He accomplished eternal redemption by His love.

*O, the love that drew salvation's plan!  
O, the grace that brought it down to man!  
O, the mighty gulf that God did span  
A Calvary!*

(“At Calvary” by William R. Newell. *The New Church Hymnal*, 1976, #438)

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and who gave us” TWO THINGS.

What did He give us?

He gave us:

1. “eternal encouragement” and

2. “good hope.”

Now there’s a reason why those **TWO ADJECTIVES** appear before those words.

He could have just said “who gave us encouragement and hope.” But he calls it “**ENTERNAL** encouragement and **GOOD** hope.”

Now let’s go back for just a second.

In verse 13 we learned that God **CHOSE** us from the beginning.

In verse 14 He verified that choice by **CALLING** us.

And in verse 16 He **LOVED** us and He **GAVE** us.

Four great **VERBS** that expressed to us how much God has done for us. And this is the God he’s calling upon and he is saying God has given us **TWO GIFTS**. And how did we receive those gifts?

“by **GRACE**.”

All of God’s gifts come “by grace.” We don’t deserve it. It’s His unmerited favor toward us.

But He gave us **TWO THINGS**. He gave us:

1. “eternal encouragement” and
2. “good hope.”

Somebody says:

The “eternal encouragement” is INWARD. And, of course, the “good hope” is OUTWARD. We’re established outwardly in this “good hope.”

(source unknown)

### Romans 8:18

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Now when somebody says “I’m giving you eternal encouragement,” what does that communicate? That’s kind of a funny phrase, isn’t it?

When we think of that though, some kinds of encouragement just last for a day, don’t they? Somebody comes along and says, “Well you’re doing a great job today.” Well that’ll last for a next few hours, until the next day starts. And so that’s not “eternal encouragement,” that’s encouragement that’s here today and gone tomorrow.

The kind of encouragement that’s the “eternal

encouragement” is it lasts beyond time. It is indeed ETERNAL, the encouragement that no matter what we’re suffering now, it is not to be compared to the glory. It’s an “eternal encouragement.”

We are looking forward to great days. This is not, in other words, a temporary comfort. It’s going to endure forever!

“ETERNAL ENCOURAGEMENT”—it lasts beyond time.

How was it described in Peter’s epistles? It’s “joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

When we think of glory, that’s the “eternal encouragement.”

Now look at the next phrase:

“good hope by grace.”

Now, what’s a “good hope”?

Well, a “good hope” is the opposite of a BAD hope.

What’s a bad hope? Stock market—yeah—that’s a good illustration of a bad hope. We never know what it’s going to do.

Well a bad hope is somebody who makes a promise that’s not planning on keeping it. So that’s a bad hope, isn’t it? It’s a bum deal, we call it.

But a “good hope” is based on **THREE THINGS—3 P’s**.

A “good hope” is based first of all on:

1. **PROMISES**—and the promise that has been made is that He’s gone to prepare a place for us and He’s going to come again and receive us unto Himself, that where He is we are going to be also. And He is reputable and every promise He makes, He fulfills.

Joshua says: “Not one of the good promises that God made to you was not fulfilled.” (ref. Joshua 23:14)

As he’s getting ready to die, he reminds the children of Israel all the good promises that God made us, He’s fulfilled. He hasn’t left one of them unfulfilled! And so it’s a “good hope” because of the One who made the promises.

But secondly, it’s a “good hope” when we look at the:

2. **PAST**—why? Because when we look at the past, there is a great track record on the promises that God has made and have been indeed fulfilled literally.

Look at Bible prophecy, four-fifths of it’s already been literally fulfilled. There’s only one-fifth of it left. That’s a “good hope” friend. When a guy’s already fulfilled four-fifths of His responsibility, we can plan on someone as reputable as God to keep the rest of it.

The PAST tells us the PRESENT.

Numbers 23:19 tells us that:

### Numbers 23:19

God is not a man that He should lie, or the son of man that He should repent. Hath He said and shall He not make it good? Or has He spoken and shall He not do it?

The answer is, He will! So it's a "good hope."

And then we look at the:

3. PRESENT—what are we experiencing right now? We're experiencing abundant life if we're walking in the Lord Jesus Christ and we've had a good day.

We gave our life today, one day of it, to the Lord Jesus and it's been a good one when we consider all the rest of them. It's been pretty nice, hasn't it? No matter what we've been through, it's a "good hope" because He's walked with us through it. He's been faithful to get us this far.

And the same One who made those statements in the PAST, who made those promises, is sustaining us right now in the PRESENT, and we can plan on a "good hope." Because when we check out here, we're checking in over there. And that's all he means.

He says: “I’m praying for two things for y’all. I’m praying for eternal encouragement because y’all are really going through it and you’re having a hard time. But I’m also praying for good hope. I want you to get your focus on the promises and on the future.”

See how easy it would have been for him to pray like we do?

“Oh Lord, these Thessalonians are really having a tough time. Would You please alleviate their suffering and would You please change their circumstances so they can enjoy walking with You.”

That’s the way we pray. But the way he prayed is “give them eternal encouragement while they’re in it, and let them hang onto a good hope, looking forward to what’s coming in the days that are ahead.”

We help one another by being an “eternal encouragement” and pointing them to the “good hope” that comes “by grace.” That’s the way we receive it.

Now, what else do we receive “by grace”?

SALVATION, don’t we?

Ephesians 2:8, 9

For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of

yourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.

Now are we praying?

There was a young lady, bless her heart, she prayed “Dear Lord, I’m not just asking for myself, but please give my mother a son-in-law.”  
(source unknown)

That’s a good prayer. She has it all figured out, how to say it.

On Valentine’s Day the pastor got up and he prayed: “O Lord, give us clear hearts, give us pure hearts, give us sweet hearts,” and all the single girls said, “Ahhhh men! Yes!”  
(source unknown)

Prayer.

We cannot expect to LIVE EFFECTIVELY if we’re PRAYING DEFECTIVELY.

Those things are not going to allow us to live that way if we’re not praying effectively.

**v. 17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.**

“comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.”



He not only prays for “eternal encouragement and good hope,” but now he prays for TWO other things that give us an indication that he is not concerned about the circumstances. He’s concerned about the CHRISTIANS IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES and what they’re going through.

He wants them to be victorious and triumphant. And what are the two things we need when we’re having a hard time? What are the two things that someone who is dealing with cancer needs more than anything else? They need somebody to put their arms around them, cry a little bit, and give them a little comfort. And someone to say “God’s strength is going to be sufficient for you while you go through this.”

And so:

“comforting and strengthening your hearts in every good work and word.”

TWO THINGS:

1. “COMFORT” and
2. “STRENGTH.”

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; who comforts us

in all of our affliction so we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort where with we ourselves are comforted of God.

Where is Paul when he writes this letter? He's in Corinth and he's going through that very thing.

And then when he turns around and writes the Corinthians later, when they're having a hard time, what does he say to them? He's saying, "Well I want you to turn to the God of all comfort and receive comfort for what you're going through."

Never once do we hear him praying for this deliverance, this freedom from these things that are designed by God to produce Christlike character. It's "comfort and strengthen your hearts."

Now let's say we need these two things. Let's say that where we are right now, the neatest thing that we could pray for is "comfort and strength."

Alright, why would we need COMFORT? Because of our AFFLICTIONS—the circumstances that have afflicted our body, or our close friends, or something of this sort. And we're needing someone to put their arms around us and just say "Hey, it's going to be alright. The God of all comfort is going to comfort you in the midst of your affliction."

Now, why do we need STRENGTH? If we need comfort for afflictions, we need strength for ADDICTIONS.

It's the things that WE DON'T DO that we need the STRENGTH TO DO.

Paul said in:

2 Corinthians 12:9

My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in your weakness...

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Isaiah 40:31

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength...

See a principle here? He doesn't pray for deliverance, he doesn't pray for a change. He prays for "comfort and strength" in the midst of the traumatic circumstances that they're facing there in that city of Thessalonica.

Colossians 1:11

strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power...

“comfort and strengthen your hearts”—WHAT—“in every good work and word.”

Now if we were to read this in some of the other translations, they reverse those words—the words “work” and “words.” Reading it in the Greek text, it’s exactly the way we’ve translated it.

“comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.”

There’s no mistake in that order. Every time we see the manifestation of a believer, whether it’s in a witness to somebody else or whether they are walking through very difficult circumstances, the things that matter most—prioritized—is their **WORKS** and then their **WORDS**.

Francis Assisi said:

Witness all the time and if you have to, use words.  
(source unknown)

That’s the right way.

That’s 1 Peter 3:15 again.

It’s the **LIVING** and the **LIPS**.

It’s the **WORKS** and the **WORDS**.

It's the CONDUCT and the CONVERSATION.

It's the PRACTICE that should precede PRECEPTS that we teach.

Our “works” then our “words.”

Our LIVES and then our LIPS—so it is in an absolute right order.

Hudson Taylor was used mightily of God in reaching a lot of China during the life that he spent. Very productive missionary. He wrote these words as he got very close to death. He said: “I'm so weak that I can't work nor read my Bible, and I can hardly pray. I can only lie still in God's arms like a little child and trust.”

(source unknown)

And that's the way Hudson Taylor went home to be with the Lord. What a great prayer warrior that man was.

Now, let's go back to our theme for just a minute.

Our KEY VERSES are these two we just looked at. We have stepped into the throne room and listened to the apostle pray for some hurting people in Thessalonica.

Now remember what we're pursuing? We're pursuing the subject of:

Delighting the Heart of God.”

The question is in this sixth study in the series is are we:

Delighting the Heart of God: By Understanding that God Loves for Us to Pray?

It really thrills Him when we push the button and we start talking and we commune with Him. The key to really getting to know anybody is to spend time in quality communion and sharing with each other. And prayer is a vital part out of that

On our print out at the Judgment Seat of Christ there is going to be the number of hours and minutes we've spent in prayer in our lifetime.

And if we're not comfortable with our present habit patterns, then realize Paul's life was consumed with it. Jesus' life was consumed with it. Biblical characters that were blessed, were consumed with prayer.

Therefore it is NOT an option. It is something that we need to be doing.

1. PRAISE and WORSHIP,
2. PETITION—laying before Him our needs and our concerns, declaring our dependence upon Him as He lives His life in and through us.

Reuben A. Torrey wrote a little book called *How to Pray* and in it he gave ELEVEN REASONS why we should pray:

(How to Pray by Reuben A. Torrey)

- 1) Because there is a devil and because prayer is the God-appointed means of resisting him;
- 2) Because prayer is God's way for us to obtain what we need from Him;
- 3) Because the apostles, whom God sent forth to be a pattern for us, considered prayer to be the most important business of their lives;
- 4) Because prayer occupied a prominent place and played a very important part in the earthly life of our Lord;
- 5) Because prayer is the most important part of the present ministry of our Lord...Hebrews 7:25;
- 6) Because prayer is the means God has appointed for our receiving mercy from Him and obtaining grace to help in time of need;
- 7) Because prayer is the means of obtaining the fullness of God's joy;
- 8) Because prayer with thanksgiving is the means of obtaining freedom from anxiety...
- 9) Because prayer is the method appointed for our obtaining the fullness of God's Spirit;
- 10) Because prayer is the means by which we are to keep watchful and be alert at Christ's return; and
- 11) Because prayer is used by God to promote our spiritual growth, bring power into our work, lead others to faith in Christ, and bring all other blessings to Christ's church.

(source unknown)

First and Second Thessalonians are filled with prayer.

If we want to do a little more study on this, in 1 Thessalonians 3:11 and 12 we have another beautiful prayer with 3 requests. He prays like this. He says:

1. “Now may our God and Father direct our way to our way to you...”
2. “Now may your love grow...”
3. “Now may you become more holy...”

Three times, three MAYs—“may...may...may.”

Did he get an answer of “yes” to all those?

“Now may the Lord direct our way to you...”

He prayed night and day for that. Did he get it? NO.

Why? God’s greater purpose was First and Second Thessalonians. And Paul didn’t know that. He thought that the only way, the only indispensable way was for him to be in Thessalonica ministering to their needs.

God said, “No! My greater purpose is for these letters to be written!”



So he gets a NO.

BUT, he's praying, he's communing with the Father.

Somebody said:

Too many people pray like little children who knock on the door and then they run away.

(source unknown)

Somebody else said:

We lie to God in prayer if we don't rely on God after prayer.

(source unknown)

And so what we need to recognize is that we have an audience with the King.

Here's the story of John Knox, that Scottish reformer. He was interrupted from his quiet time by a friend who just kept banging on his door.

(Before You Hit the Wall by Danny Lehmann)

Knox finally opened the door, and his friend informed him that the King of England had come to visit, and was impatient to see Knox. "You tell the King of England...that I am meeting with the King of the Universe, and I won't be interrupted by him!"

(source unknown)

Right response.

Bill Hybels put it this way:

(If I Really Believe, Why Do I Have These Doubts? by Lynn Anderson)

- If your request is wrong, God says, “No.”
- If the time is wrong, God says, “Slow.”
- If you are wrong, God says, “Grow.”
- If the request is right, the timing is right, and you are right, God says, “Go.”

(source unknown)

So it's either:

NO,

SLOW,

GROW or

GO.

One of the four.

Now, that was our KEY VERSES for this study. But when we open chapter 3, he's not through praying yet.

These first two verses in chapter 3, he's dealing with his concern.

He has TWO CONCERNS. He believes in prayer. He's praying these things for them, but he's asking them to pray these two things for him now in the next two verses.

When we come to the word "Finally" it blesses our heart. We realize the preacher is almost done when he gets to "finally." Don't ever believe it.

In chapter 4 of 1 Thessalonians he says "finally brethren" and he writes chapter 5 after that, so it's a longer epistle.

And just because chapter 3, verse 1 starts with "finally," we still have a lot of verses left. We have two more studies to go in this thing before we're going to finish this book so don't be led off track by "finally."

**3:v. 1 Finally, brethren, be praying for us in order that the word of the Lord may be spreading rapidly and be glorified, even as it is doing also with you;**

"Finally, brethren,"—WHAT?—"be praying..."

That's in the PRESENT TENSE.

That means "every time you think of us, pray."

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“Keep on praying,” we could translate that.

“...for us”—PURPOSE, prayer request #1—“in order that the word of the Lord may be spreading rapidly and be glorified, even as it is doing also with you;”

Here’s a man who is suffering in Corinth as he writes this letter and he doesn’t say anything about his suffering. First, it’s the message. His heart is so consumed with getting out the message that he asked them pray first for that—that the Word of God would spread. And he is secondary as the man. The message is the most important thing.

“...in order that the word of the Lord may be spreading rapidly and may be glorified, even as it is doing also with you.”

Keep on praying but pray, please, for TWO THINGS for us:

1. “that the word of the Lord may be spreading rapidly,” and
2. “be glorified.”

Let’s read 1 Thessalonians 1:8 to give an idea of what this means.

### 1 Thessalonians 1:8

For from you the word of the Lord has been sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we are not finding it

necessary to be saying a thing.

The Word of God has had free course and it's spreading in every place.

We're thankful for that. Know why? The Word of God always works.

In Isaiah 55 the Lord says:

### Isaiah 55:11

My word will not return unto Me void, but it shall prosper. It shall accomplish that which I please, it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

We can always count, when we're faithful in sowing God's Word, that it is going to bring forth fruit and it's going to work in people's lives.

One of the neatest verses in 1 Thessalonians is:

### 1 Thessalonians 2:13

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.

The Word of God is **ALIVE**—Hebrews 4:12—**POWERFUL!**  
And it works in the lives of individuals, in changing them and making them more like the Lord Jesus.

Now when it says its “glorified,” what does that mean?

Anything is “glorified” when it works. Isn’t that right?

If it works we get excited about it.

The Word of God works and we glory when we hear testimonies with how God’s Word is saving marriages—how God’s Word is changing lives.

Why is the Word alive and what does it do because it is alive? The very thing it’s doing to us right now. We listen to this but we’re not going to go out of here the same if we’re an obedient child of God. Why?

The Word of God **CONFRONTED** us, didn’t it? It nailed us right between the eyes, with regard to our prayer life, and we just don’t feel comfortable at all.

And secondly, it **CONVICTED** us. When we start thinking about the amount of time we took today to spend with the Lord.

What other things does the Word do? It **CONQUERS** us. It literally smashes us. It’s like a hammer. It’s like a fire that burns.

It works and then what does it do? It CHANGES us.

## 2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.

When we really believe that, it just gets so exciting just to spend time in the Word of God and allow it to not only change our life but to change the lives of those who are being exposed to the truth of Scripture.

This story about Charles Haddon Spurgeon is so good:

Five young college students were spending a Sunday in London, so they went to hear the famed Charles Haddon Spurgeon. While waiting for the doors to open, the students were greeted by a man who said, "Gentlemen, let me show you around. Would you like to see the heating plant of the church?" Now these young guys were not all that interested, for it was a hot day in July. But they didn't want to disappoint their tour guide so, not to offend him, they consented. And the young men were taken down a stairway to a door and the door was quietly opened. And their guide whispered "This is our heating plant." Surprised the students saw 700 people on their knees praying to God, seeking the blessing on the service that was getting ready to start upstairs in the auditorium. Softly closing the door, the gentleman introduced himself. "My name is Charles Haddon Spurgeon."

*(Our Daily Bread, April 24, year unknown)*

## Improving the Pastor's Preaching

Sunday the sermon was sluggish,  
    'Twas hard attention to keep.  
The theme was faultily chosen,  
    It almost put me to sleep.  
Monday was blue with sheer boredom;  
    Tuesday was carnal by choice.  
Wednesday my conscience was wakened  
    By pleas from a still, small voice.  
Prayer meeting left me uplifted,  
    Loyalty lingering long.  
Thursday my heart was responding;  
    Friday His nudging was strong.  
I came to thorough repentance  
    The following Saturday;  
I yielded in full surrender  
    As all on the altar I lay.  
Sunday the sermon was perfect,  
    Superb and quite at its peak;  
Amazing how greatly that pastor  
    Improved in the space of one week!

(source unknown)

That's the difference because we've been praying.

Stephen Olford had a list for the way he prayed. He would pray on Monday for the missionaries, on Tuesday for his



tasks, and on Wednesday for the workers that he was working with. Thursday he'd spend in thanksgiving, Friday for his family, Saturday for the saints, and then Sunday for all the sinners that he was spending time with.  
(source unknown)

That's a great way to do it.

Joe Aldrich has written a book called *Prayer Summits* and he says this:

(Prayer Summits: Seeking God's Agenda for Your Community  
by Joe Aldrich. Multnomah: Portland, OR. Copyright © Joe Aldrich, 1992)

What's wrong today? Why are 80 percent of the churches in the United States not growing? Could it be that all across America spiritual leaders need to be shaken, need to assume responsibility for their churches, and call a time for confession and repentance? Do they need to foster the truth of a corporate church in their community composed of believers outside their immediate fellowship?

If a church is not reaching the lost, shouldn't that be repented of?

If a church is divided and full of strife, shouldn't that be repented of?

If a church has a history of splits and divisions, ...

If a church has been unfair in its treatment of its [pastor]

...

If a church has not maintained purity, ...

If a church has been critical of other Bible-believing churches, ...

If a church has compromised biblical theology, ...

If a church has no concern for the poor and down-trodden,

...

If a church's worship is cold, formal, and lacks life, ...

If a church has made its traditions sacred, ...

If a church board is divided, ...

If a church is overcome with materialism, shouldn't [all of] that be repented of?

pp. 158-9

He's saying "And yes!" And then:

If a church is lukewarm for God, shouldn't that be repented of?

pp. 159

Isn't it amazing, when we see how God moves mightily in response to prayer and the change that begins to take place?

(And the Angels Were Silent by Max Lucado)

A nineteenth century Sunday school teacher who led a Boston shoe clerk to Christ. The teacher's name you've never heard: Kimball. The name of the shoe clerk he converted was: Dwight L. Moody.

Moody became an evangelist and had a major influence on a young preacher named F. B. Meyer. [One of my very favorite writers] Meyer began to preach on college campuses and while

doing so, converted J. Wilbur Chapman. Chapman became involved in the YMCA and arranged for a former baseball player named Billy Sunday to come to Charlotte, North Carolina, for a revival. A group of Charlotte community leaders were so enthusiastic afterward that they planned another campaign and brought Mordecai Hamm to town to preach. And in that revival a young man named Billy Graham yielded his life to Christ.

Did the Boston school teacher have any idea what would become of his conversation with a simple shoe salesman?  
(source unknown)

People who are sensitive, praying, and are a witness for Christ.

A. W. Tozer said:

(The Set of the Sail by A. W. Tozer)

God has set eternity in our hearts and we have chosen time instead. He is trying to interest us in a glorious tomorrow and we are settling for an inglorious today. We are bogged down in local interests and have lost sight of the eternal purposes. We improvise and muddle along, hoping for heaven at last but showing no eagerness to get there, correct in doctrine but weary of prayer and bored with God.  
(source unknown)

That guy's always strong when he writes.

**v. 2 and that we may be delivered from the perverted and evil men; for not all are having the faith.**

“and that”—SECOND PRAYER—“we may be delivered from the perverted and evil men; for not all are having the faith.”

Now he says: “There are some guys that are out to get us and they’re perverted evil men. And we’re just asking that we might be kept from them so that we can continue to teach the Scriptures.”

1. that the Word of God might have free course
2. but these perverted men who don’t have the faith might not be successful in silencing the ones who are preaching the message.

Here’s an appropriate story:

(Taken from “Hearing the Songs of Praise in Ethiopia” by Bill Harding. *Decision* magazine, November 1991)

Bill Harding is the writer of this article, grew up in a missionary family in Ethiopia, but when he felt God’s call to missions in the 1980s that country was closed to missionaries. However, he was able to get in as a water development specialist, giving him the opportunity to help the people of Ethiopia drill the wells they needed as well as to share with them the Living Water.

When the government decided in 1990 to restore religious

liberty the underground church of Ethiopia surfaced. Some Christians leaders suggested that Harding use the meadow in front of his house to hold a church conference. It had been eight years since they had been able to gather publicly. Only about a thousand were expected to come, but over 10,000 men, women, and children converged on that meadow to join in giving thanks for their new freedom. There followed four solid days of singing and preaching, much of the time in a downpour. One night during this time the Hardings were awakened by a loud clap of thunder. Through the roar of the rain on their tin roof they heard another sound—voices singing praises to God!

As Christians began to witness openly more than 1,000 people came to Christ in the surrounding region every month during that first year. The greatest challenge has been trying to ground all these new believers in the Word and train leaders for them. The key to this revival has been prayer. During the years of persecution the believers prayed daily at 4:00 a.m., and they have continued to pray.

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Prayer in the lives of believers and the underground church have caused the dynamic and dramatic things we're witnessing today.

God moves mightily when we pray.

Are we delighting the heart of God by being a person who is being faithful in our prayer life?

We have these lessons come from our study:

Lesson #1: Our Heavenly Father has not only chosen us and called us, but He has loved us and given us eternal encouragement and good hope.

Lesson #2: Are you “delighting the heart of God” by your practice of prayer?

Lesson #3: God delights to give us, as an act of grace, eternal encouragement and good hope.

Lesson #4: God is in the business of comforting and strengthening our hearts when we come to Him in prayer.

Lesson #5: In God’s sight our works are more important than our words in our witness.

Lesson #6: The exposition of the Scriptures must be accompanied by the prayers of the saints to be effective.

Lesson #7: Paul’s great desire was that the Word would be spreading rapidly and be glorified in changed lives.

Lesson #8: There are perverted and evil men who will stand against the proclamation of the Gospel.

Lesson #9: Many are having faith but not all are having the faith, that is, saving faith.

Joe Aldrich shared this story on prayer:

(Prayer Summits by Joe Aldrich)

On Monday afternoon, we began four days of prayer together. Not one message was given (that in itself is a miracle among sixty preachers!).

From the very first, God began to move in incredible awakening and reviving power. It was to be one of the most precious seasons of awakening that I have ever experienced in my life.

The first day focused on loving and worshiping Jesus and renewing our relationship to Him. We would sit in a large circle about two rows of seats and simply go to prayer. Some would lead out in a song. Some would share a Scripture. All would pray—listening to each other and building one another up on a previous petition. Most of us had never met before. It was amazing to see how God began to melt our hearts as we made the simple commitment to love Him and to share our hearts.

The first evening, the showers of awakening were already in evidence. Trust was being built among the men. We had begun to pray for one another. As the sun set, we gathered around three small tables to share communion. Soft candle light brightened the warm conference room. As various men knelt to receive the elements, the group led forth in thundering praise of many of the great hymns of the church. We were falling in love with the Savior again and we were growing in love for one another.

(source unknown)

He goes on to say:

(Prayer Summits by Joe Aldrich)

On the third day an Assembly of God minister stood up to confess his sin of judgment toward a Conservative Baptist minister. With tears in his eyes he said, “I was told in Bible school that you believed all the wrong things. I thought you were an elitist. Now I see I was wrong. You love the same Jesus. You believe the same things. Please forgive me.”

The Baptist minister then blurted out, “I thought the same things about you. But I was wrong. Would you forgive me?”

The two of them crossed the room and hugged each other as tears flowed freely.

(source unknown)

Now out of several of those, they had a tremendous meeting in Portland, Oregon.

(Prayer Summits by Joe Aldrich)

This night over 13,500 Christians from every evangelical denomination dismissed their evening services. In buses and vans and cars they came to fill the Portland Coliseum. The opening words of this historic worship and praise service were, “This is the best family reunion that Portland has ever had.”



To that, cheers and applause thundered across the vast auditorium. For the next 2 1/2 hours our spirits were one in Christ. The celebrating never let up. Together we sang and prayed and clapped for God.  
(source unknown)

Then he said this:

(Prayer Summits by Joe Aldrich)

The celebration closed with a glorious surprise, the memory of which this pastor will carry with him until the day he dies. Every pastor was asked to walk to the front of the auditorium, stand before the cross, and turn and face the congregation.

No one anticipated what would happen next.

Uncounted hundreds of us came forward.

We who had been so scandalized by the media.

We who live in such loneliness of leadership.

We who in the world are made to feel so unwanted, unappreciated.

We whom the world regards as so uninformed and beside the point.

As we came out from the ranks of laymen and began to mass before the people, all heaven broke loose. For the first time, all of us in the same instant saw how many of us there are. In a

universal thunder of clapping, the whole place broke loose with long, sustained applause for Portland's pastors.

No walk down an aisle has ever meant more to me than this walk.

Intellectually, I knew I was not alone. But at 8:30 P.M. January 19, 1992, I saw I was not alone. For the first time in my life, every fiber of my being FELT like I was not alone. All I could do was stand there with my fellow pastors before 13,500 Christians I will never know personally, thank God for Jesus and the power of His blood, and think of the reception that awaits all of us—for if angels rejoice when we are saved, they will surely applaud when we finally make it home to heaven.

(source unknown)

Father, there is a mighty movement of Your Spirit in our land and may we be part of it. Father if there's a man or woman that needs to read this book and begin to do things in their city, that there might be a prayer summit and may the Spirit of God begin to move mightily. How that would delight Your heart for someone to make that commitment. Father, we thank You for Your Word and the privilege of studying it. May the lessons that come from the passage prove to be indelibly inscribed on our hearts. And may we, above all, change our prayer habits to bring them more in conformity with that which brings You great pleasure. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

# A Practical Study of 2 THESSALONIANS: Delighting the Heart of God

## “Learning to Bring Pleasure to God”

Key verse 3:16 — *“Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all!”*

### **STUDY NUMBER SIX – BY UNDERSTANDING GOD LOVES FOR US TO PRAY – 2 THESSALONIANS 2:16-3:2**

#### **KEY VERSES 2:16, 17**

v. 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and who gave us eternal encouragement and good hope by grace,

v. 17 comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

3:v. 1 Finally, brethren, be praying for us in order that the word of the Lord may be spreading rapidly and be glorified, even as it is doing also with you;

v. 2 and that we may be delivered from the perverted and evil men; for not all are having the faith.

#### **NOTES**

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:2 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. What have the “Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father” done for us, according to verse 16?

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3. What two things have they given us, according to verse 16?

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4. What two things does Paul pray for in verse 17?

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5. In what two ways will God’s comfort and strength manifest itself in the heart of the Thessalonians, according to verse 17?

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6. What does Paul ask the Thessalonians to pray for them in verses 1 & 2?

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7. Suggest ways that the Word of God can be glorified in and through us.

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8. What does Paul ask to be “delivered from,” according to verse 2?

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

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10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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## LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

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

LESSON #1: Our Heavenly Father has not only chosen us and called us, but He has loved us and given us eternal encouragement and good hope.

LESSON #2: Are you “delighting the heart of God” by your practice of prayer?

LESSON #3: God delights to give us, as an act of grace, eternal encouragement and good hope.

LESSON #4: God is in the business of comforting and strengthening our hearts when we come to Him in prayer.

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