



Thoughts from First Thessalonians ...

## Some Important Prayers

From the time of the apostle Paul's conversion in his immersion, he suffered persecution as a result of his preaching Christ. At some point, the inquirer might ask what big benefit Paul was getting from going through all the privations he experienced. Was it fame? Clearly not. In Paul's own words, "I think God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, as men condemned to death ... we are fools for Christ's sake." Was it fortune? Not that either. "To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed" (1 Corinthians 4:9-13). What motivated the apostle was his desire to see souls securely saved for all eternity. This is why he preached, why he was willing to suffer hardship, and why he prayed.

- **Rendering thanks** — The apostle John often expressed his delight in hearing of the faithfulness of the brethren. "I was very glad," said he "to the chosen lady and her children," "to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father" (2 John 1:4). The apostle Paul, in a similar spirit, wrote, "For what thanks can we render to God for you!" Upon hearing of their faithfulness in Thessalonica, Paul's first thought was to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to the Almighty.
- **See your face** — When people have been absent from others whom they dearly love, it is with tremendous joy that they are actually able to have physical contact with them again. Especially do they desire to look once again into the loved ones' eyes, to see their faces again. "We night and day," affirms the apostle, "keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face" (1 Thessalonians 3:10). He really loves them, and clearly expresses that love in this way.
- **Complete the job** — The apostle Paul often expressed his desire to make sure that each of the brethren was fully equipped and capable of carrying out the purpose of God in his life. "And we proclaim [Jesus]," asseverated the apostle, "admonishing every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ" (Colossians 1:28). He also expressed that same sentiment toward the Thessalonian brethren, noting that his *most earnest* prayers are that "we may complete what is lacking in your faith." Paul would have to be physically present in those days to give his instruction and provide his example. These he was more than willing to do; time and space were what prevented him from being able to supply to the brethren all that he wanted to impart to them.
- **Direct our way** — Thus desiring to see the brethren and help them complete any lack in their faith, Paul would therefore pray to that end. "Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord," he petitions, "direct our way to you (1 Thessalonians 3:11). It is interesting that this most earnest prayer would appeal to both the Father and the Son; the intensity of the petition is thus very clear.

*The words of Paul's prayer automatically flow as stream of consciousness.*

The apostle Paul was evidently a man of God who spent much time in prayer; his prison time undoubtedly gave him a little more time for such personal prayer. The words of prayer automatically flow as part of his stream of consciousness. As one who spent prayer time in praise, thanksgiving, petition, supplication, and intercession, Paul in his prayers did not focus on self, but on the spiritual needs of others, for the growth of the church, and for the glorification of King Jesus. "We really live," he says, but only "if you stand firm in the Lord." Again he says, "we rejoice before our God," but not for anything personal, rather "on your account." His desire is to see their face, but so that he might "complete what is lacking in your faith." The honesty of his concern is reflected, then, in his sincere petitions to the great God over all.

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