**Faith in Uncertain Times - Part 12**

**Prayer and the Word – 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5**

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – April 25th, 2021

**Intro:**

* Ministry and missions is hard work, and many have been battered and bruised, discouraged, and defeated along the way. It has been this way since the dawn of creation and continues this way to this very day. But the kingdom of God still advances by the grace of God to those who have given themselves to courageously advancing the cause of Christ in our communities and to every corner of creation. We are to greatly rejoice whenever the gospel seed takes root and churches are established and growing. Thessalonica was one of those places where this had taken place.
* Paul and his companions continue to pray for, encourage and strengthen this newborn Church in the city of Thessalonica. He has explained to them many facets of the faith and provided specific information about the coming of the Lord.
* His main concern for them is that they would continue to grow in love for each other and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ while they were enduring persistent opposition. This is also the main concern of the Holy Spirit for this Church that we would continue to grow broader and wider in our love for each other and the world, and we would grow deeper and stronger in our faith and faithfulness in Christ.
* Now that they and we have been instructed in the truth about the man of lawlessness and the return of Christ, He then prays for us that we would be encouraged, have hope, and be strengthened as we continue in good deeds and good words.
* Paul then requests these newborn believers to pray for them and the ministry of the word. Here is this called, trained, mature gifted apostle asking these infants in Christ to pray for him! Why? Because their prayers were just as effective as his, not because they were better prayers, but because they are all praying to the same God who answers.
* And you would think that Paul was gifted enough, trained enough, supported enough to handle the ministry on his own. You would think that if anyone did not need prayer, it would be Paul. The truth is that spiritual work must be done by spiritual means. Yes, he did need to be prepared, and he did need to study to handle the word well. All over the NT, we see the coupling of prayer and the ministry of the word. The Apostles devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). Repeatedly all over scripture, the churches were asked to pray for the ministry of the word (Col. 4:2-4, Eph. 6:19). Paul mentions prayer 41 times in his 13 letters to the churches. In fact, there are 650 prayers listed in the Bible and 450 recorded answers to prayer. The gospels record Jesus praying 25 different times. The only recorded thing the disciples asked Jesus to teach them was to pray (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-things-you-should-know-about-prayer-in-the-bible1/>).
* We pray because God sees. We pray because God hears. We pray because God cares. We pray because God acts. We pray because God invites us to have an audience with Him. We pray because prayer is the mechanism that God uses to partner with His people to glorify Himself and accomplish His will in the world. We pray to access God’s heart and to receive provision from His hand. We pray to partner with what God is doing in the world. We pray to combat our pride for thinking we have the power to do His will on our own. We pray for power to do the work that He has called. We pray to acknowledge our dependence upon God. We pray because we are limited, and God is not. Prayer and proclamation of the word is how the kingdom advances and transforms the world. Prayer is a powerful weapon to bring down spiritual strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4) and accomplish what only He can do.
* This is why we pray; this is why scripture calls us to pray; this is why I am calling you to pray. If we as a church are ever going to accomplish what God is calling us to do, we must pray, repeatedly, devotedly, and urgently.
* So, this morning, the very word of God will instruct us as to how we are to pray, and what we are to honor, to see the power of God working in your life and the ministry of this Church.

**Pray the message spreads rapidly**

**2 Thess 3:1a NIV**

**As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly**

* This literally means that the message of the Lord “runs.” So why would we need to pray this? Why the urgency? First, because of lost time. If people knew the message sooner in their lives, it would save them a ton of lost time and deep pain. The sooner the message reaches people’s lives, the sooner the power of the message will be at work in their lives.
* Second, there are people who and places that have never heard the message, and they need to see the hope of the Son shine in their darkness.
* Third, there are impediments for the rapid spread of the gospel, from closed borders, to closed doors, to closed minds. We, in the Church, have lost our urgency, and we have let slip the message of the gospel among our top priorities. We need to pray that walls will come down and our urgency to come up and the hope to spring forth like the light of day. Pray for your family this way, pray for your neighbors this way, pray for the world in this way.

**Pray the message is honored deeply**

**2 Thess 3:1b NIV**

**As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly *and be honored, just as it was with you*.**

* It is not enough that the message spreads rapidly; we must also pray that the message of the Lord is honored. That people receive this message and honor it as the very word of God, like the people in Thessalonica

**1 Thess 2:13 ESV**

**And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.**

* When people understand that the message is not the message of men, but the message of the one true creator God, they respond to it differently. It is one thing to hear the message, and it is completely another to honor the message. If you honor the message as the word of God, then you make room for it in your heart; you place it in a “sacred place” in the halls of your heart. You talk about it; you live by it, you show it off to others. You give yourself to it, you live in it, and it lives in you – the word of God is living and active (Heb. 4:12).
* How well do you honor the word of the Lord? What place does it have in the halls of your heart? The biggest concern for those who have not heard is that they hear the message of the Lord, and my biggest concern is that those who have heard, honor it for what it is.

**Pray the messengers are delivered from evil people**

**2 Thess 3:2 NIV**

**And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith.**

* It is not a popular position to think that there are indeed wicked and evil people. There is a large portion of our society that claims there are no “evil” people, only “evil” circumstances.

“There are no evil people; there are perfectly good people who are of the track, but they do not need condemnation or punishment; they only need to get upon the rails again.” - Wallace D. Wattles **(Slide)**

* This is a nice humanist thought, and many people follow this philosophy, but it is contrary to what is written in the word. There are evil and wicked people in the world. Faith is what changes people from evil to good, by giving us a new nature that is holy and true. This is why we must be born again, but not everyone has faith. The truth is we are all evil.
* People choose to believe the lie because it suits them better to do evil and wicked things, and oppose that which is holy and right. They can and do real damage, and when the message of the Lord is being communicated, evil and wicked people oppose it. And it is interesting that they asked for deliverance from them, meaning that these people would be turned over to their wickedness (see Rom. 1:18-32). When you pray for the Church and the ministry of the message of the gospel, pray that the messengers will be delivered from evil people because there are evil people in the world.

**Honor the word of the Lord**

**2 Thess 3:3 NIV**

**But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.**

* Paul then turns a corner to encourage and instruct the Thessalonians as to what the Lord was doing because they chose to honor the word of the Lord. Paul turns to focus on what the Lord will do, and He does these things for them and for all people who choose to honor the word of the Lord.
* *If you honor the word, then the faithful Lord will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.* Through the word, the Lord who is faithful to His word with strengthen you, you will gain strength from the Lord through His word. You will be able to stand; you will be able to withstand when you are standing on the rock.

**Matt 7:24-26 NIV**

**Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.**

* He will strengthen and establish us along the way, and He will protect us on that day. Another name for the evil one is the accuser – **“who accuses them day and night before our God. 11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (Rev 12:10-11 ESV).** Because we honor the word, you will be strengthened and established, and protected from the accuser by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of your testimony. He is in you, and you are in Him, and you will not be condemned.

**2 Thess 3:4 NIV**

**We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command.**

* *If you honor the word, then you will continue to do what it commands.* These two things go hand in hand. If the word is honored, then it will be obeyed, it will be heeded, it will be followed. We will do what the apostles have told us because we recognize the word of the Lord in their hand, and we will submit ourselves to it. “I did not make it, no it is making me. It is the very truth of God and not the invention of any man” (Rich Mullins – Creed). The Honoring of the word comes first, and then the doing of the word will follow.

**2 Thess 3:5 NIV**

**May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.**

* *If you honor the word, then pray that your heart will be directed into God’s love.* Those that honor the word should see and be directed into the love of God. They will see His love all throughout the Old and the New Testaments, where He creates by His love, He engages by His love, He directs by His love, He redeems by His love, He disciplines by His love, He restores by His love, and He saves by His love. And our hearts honor the word and are directed into God’s love, we will love Him all the more (we love because He first loved us - I John 4:19) and reflect His heart to the world.
* *If you honor the word, then pray that your heart will be directed into Christ’s perseverance.* You will see the word persevered until the end. We, from the word, should set our hearts into the perseverance of Christ that is seen in Him and the lives of so many others. That we will have the love that will help us to continue to persevere until the end as well, until the new day of the Lord will dawn.

**Conclusion and Communion**

* *Honor the word of the Lord, and the Lord of the word will honor you.*
* Be people of prayer, pray the word would spread rapidly, pray the word will be honored deeply, pray the messengers and the ministers will be delivered from wicked and evil people. Choose to honor the word and the faithful one.

**Jude 24-25 ESV**

**Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 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.**

* Communion