

Lord, Teach Us to Pray – Part 4
Praying for our Church – 2 Thess 1:3-4; 11-12
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – May 15th, 2022

Intro:

- If I asked you to pray for our church, how would you pray? The church can only rise as high as the tide of our prayers take it. This morning, we will look at a text that will give us three things to thank God for and three things to ask God for.

THANK GOD

2 Thess 1:3-4 NIV

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. 4 Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

- Okay, did you catch the three things? The first is:

Thank God that faith is growing

- Faith is growing in this place; we are to thank God that this is happening and continue to pray that this is the case. We are indeed a greenhouse in which faith is to be growing. This is the first part of our mission statement; we are to bring about the obedience of faith.
- We as a church have a priority in making sure that our faith is growing, active and fruitful. This is the first and foremost focus of a church. This is the result we are looking for.
- Second, we are to give thanks that love is increasing.

Thank God that love is increasing

- The main thing that brings us all together is our faith, and the main thing that keeps us together is our love. No one wants to be part of a house of faith that does not have love. We are to love each other deeply from the heart. The encouragement and the command to “love one another” is all over the place in the New Testament. Jesus said that people would know that we are His disciples if we love one another (John 13:34). And we want our love to be increasing for each other. The more diverse we are and the more we love one another, the greater the church is and the more glory God receives.
- Take time to do this. Be intentional about doing this. Make room in your heart and in your schedule. Look for ways to show love for other people. A healthy church is a church that excels at this. So let’s do this together. We will all be enriched by doing this, and our community will change because of this, because we are all looking for and made for love.
- Thirdly, we are to give thanks that people are persevering.

Thank God that people are persevering

- We are to thank God that we continue to preserve in our faith during persecutions, trials, and things we must endure. I have found it is much easier to start something than to finish. In Christianity, we don't get awards for what we start but how we finish. This is true in most of life as well, and you don't get a diploma without finishing all your courses. You don't get a medal for a marathon without finishing the race. Process through perseverance is precious to God. Trials are used to conform us into the image of His Son. Even Jesus was "perfected" in what He had to endure (see Hebrews 2:10).
- Being tested through fire is how we are proved and how we are improved. This is how we grow stronger, and this is how we mature.
- If faith is not growing, if love is not increasing, if people are not persevering, we don't have a church, or we don't have a healthy church. These are three gauges we can use to see how we are doing. We are growing in all three of these areas, for which I am thankful to God, and you should be as well.
- Continue to thank God for this and pray that we will continue to grow in these three areas.
- Paul, in this letter, goes on to address those living in Thessalonica specifically in validating and vindicating their suffering in verses 5-10, and then he goes on to pray for them in three specific ways. I want us to pray for these things as well. Then the second main point of this message is the "pray that" part. First, we "give thanks," and second, we "pray that."

PRAY THAT

2 Thess 1:11-12 NIV

With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. 12 We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- So we are going to pray for the three primary things from this passage.

Pray that we will walk worthy of His calling

- Now, none of us is "worthy" to be called. We are called completely by and from the grace of God. We can't earn grace or salvation. It can only be received by the one who calls us with it and from it.
- That being said, once we have received the grace of God, we are to walk according to it (see Ephesians 4:1). This is "Father, help me to walk in a way that is true of your grace and true of your Son." Let my feet follow my faith. May I live like your son as a Christian as I follow Him. God help us to live like Christians and grow in our Christlike actions.
- Now, actions flow from the heart and thoughts. This is why the heart and mind are so important, and then from them, our actions reflect what we believe.
- This is not praying for passing a test, or getting a good job, or having the wisdom or energy for the day. This is a prayer that we may live lives worthy of what it means to be a Christian. This is a serious prayer, and a prayer I want you to pray for us as a church that we would reflect Christ well in the world.

- Next, we are to pray that we will be empowered to achieve our desires and deeds, and this is a fun one!

Pray that we will be empowered to achieve our desires and deeds

- Did you see that in the second part of verse 11? **“That by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith.”** This is a cool prayer! That God will give us His power to accomplish (bring to fruition) our every desire for goodness. That is huge! I have a lot of ideas and desires for goodness to be seen in and through us as a church. The prayer is that God will give us His power to achieve these things. Also, He will give us His power to fulfill every deed that is prompted by our faith. This is so cool. I don’t like having limits. We all have limits. We are all finite. But we are asking the One who is infinite to give us His power to accomplish every desire for goodness and every deed prompted by our faith. This, again, sounds like a whole lot of fun to me.
- I think that church should be fun. One of my main prayers for this place that this will be a very enjoyable, satisfying, and may I say, “fun” season in your life and the life of this church. I want people to come in here with joy because it is enjoyable and fun and satisfying and wonderful to be here. I want people to come here because they want to be here, not because they are obligated to be here. So, let’s ask God to give us His power to achieve our every desire for goodness and our every deed prompted by our faith.
- And lastly, pray that we will glorify Jesus, and we will be glorified in Him.

Pray that we will glorify Jesus and we will be glorified in Him

- This ultimately is our aim and the primary thrust of our mission statement, that we do what we do for “the sake of His name.” This is the point of the church: to bring glory to Christ. We bring glory to Christ by being like Him as a community. We do this for His glory and praise. Not in the name of an individual, even though each of us individually has a part to play, not for a name of a church, even though we belong to this church called Crosspoint. This is to bring glory to His name, that He will be glorified through everything we do.
- Individuals and churches get off track when they are, in reality, trying to make their name great – versus magnifying the name that is already great. It is a subtle shift that is the difference between receiving glory from God or just glory from men. People will applaud you for achievements, but are we looking to achieve for our praise or the praise of another?
- This is what is meant by we being “glorified in Him” as we aim to glorify God. God will praise us for glorifying Him (see I Peter 1:7). I want us to have our focus and motivation to glorify Jesus in everything we do, and also, I want God to glorify you because you are glorifying Him. True success is measured by the glory of God, not the glory of people.

Conclusion and Communion

- So, I am asking you to pray in your personal prayer time along the lines of Luke 11. When you pray for the church, please pray along the lines of this passage. Give thanks that we are growing in faith, increasing in love, and persevering through pain. Please pray that we will walk worthy of His calling, that God will empower our desires and our deeds, and that we will glorify Jesus and that He would glorify us.