

INTRODUCTION

- [Mt6:10/26:39](#) – learning to pray that **God's will be done**; how do we know what that is?
- One way is to study, and to pray **the prayers of the Bible**; they give us a divinely inspired direction as to what kind of things we can be praying for ourselves and others; it gives us the *priorities* of what we are to pray
- Example of D.A. Carson's [A Call to Spiritual Reformation](#), a study of Paul's prayers
- This morning we will study one of those prayers, with the hope that these things will **work their way into our own prayer closets**
- As we look at this prayer in 1Thess3:11-13, I want to remind you that prayer assumes **the sovereignty and control of God over all things**; if God is not in control and able to influence and work in human history, there is no reason for prayer
- These are all prayers of God's sovereign work "may our God...the Lord...He"; these are expressed in forms of wishes, but in reality they indicate what Paul was praying for them
- They are **cooperative**, including both the work of the Father and the Lord Jesus (v.11) – this points us undeniable to the **deity or godhood of the Lord Jesus Christ**, and how they are working together for God's purposes; thus, very appropriate to pray to both

EXPOSITION

I. A PRAYER FOR THEIR **REUNION** – v.11

- As we've seen previously, Paul has a **deep love for them**, not merely professional
- He longs to see them "face to face"; so his prayers are deeply forged by the fires of his desires for them
- Asking that they would "**direct our way to you**", lit. "make way straight"; to remove hindrances and obstructions to a direct path
- Satan has been hindering ([2:18](#)) through the secondary means of religious and political persecution; it will take more than their own ingenuity to overcome him, but need God's powerful working
- It will be necessary for the all-powerful God to move in human hearts and circumstances to enable them to go
- **The purpose** of this reunion was to help complete what was lacking in their faith (v.10); the underlying principle is that God would do all necessary for their **spiritual growth**

Application: this calls us to pray for God to sovereignly work so as to bring the influences necessary for our spiritual growth. Though Satan is active and wants to hinder, that the Lord would powerfully work for the increased faith of our brothers and sisters.

II. A PRAYER FOR THEIR **LOVE** – v.12

- He again prays, that the Lord would work this in them; it has to do particularly with their love, which he acknowledges has **God as the fountain and source**
- Both of these words indicate a **growth** to the point of abundance and **overflowing**
- Illustration: the filling of a swimming pool, the overflowing of the water
- Though they already had love ([1Thess4:9](#)), Paul was not content for it to remain at the same level
- No matter what level we may be, there is **room for increase** – [1Cor13](#) kind of love (who has as much as desire?)
- The desire for an increase in this love is first and foremost so that the Father would be glorified ([Jn15:8](#))
- There are two groups of people that he prays this might increase to; first, the body of Christ, "**one another**", the church, the brethren, the body of Christ
- The second group he mentions is simply "**and to all**"; it is this love overflowing to those outside of the church, particularly their persecutors ([1Thes5:15](#) expanded in [Rom12:17-21](#))
- This is one of the clearest evidences of grace, a Christ-like love for the brethren and even to enemies
Love is the power to destroy hate and persecutaðtion. It wins great victories even in the midst of Christ's enemies. Yet the writers do not demand this love of the Thessalonians as though they themselves are able to produce it; they ask the Lord to bestow it even as he is the fount of this love. Without Him and the power of His love we are able to do nothing. (Lenski)
- This is not "**natural**", but by virtue of the fact that he prays indicates there is need for the supernatural
When God [directs our life with His Word], he does not look to what we can do, but requires from us what is above our strength, that we may learn to ask from him power to accomplish it. (Calvin)
- He desires their love increase "just as we do to you" (again affirming them)
- Why did he use **their own example** instead of Christ's? Because they were an example of the love of God through sinful men, turning a persecutor into a lover of the Church
If the Lord filled these men with such love, the Thessalonians will see that the Lord can do this also for them. (Lenski)

- This prayer for their increased love Paul saw being fulfilled within his lifetime (2Thes1:3)

Application: This is one of the most fundamental things we can be praying for one another.

- It is not an insult to pray that it would abound, but a continuance of God's work He is already doing
- It is to pray for an increase of love first to the body of Christ, then to see it overflow to those outside of the church, especially those who cause the greatest grief and difficulties in our lives.

III. A PRAYER FOR THEIR PERFECTION – v.13

- There is a **connection** between this part of his prayer and the previous, seen in the "so that"; the increase of love will be a moving toward what he prays here
- The essence of the prayer is the establishment or making steady or strong **their hearts** (inner person) **without blame** (or blemish) **in holiness**
- This is more than outward conformity, but all their inner person being actually holy; not just holy acts, but those acts flowing out of a holy heart
- **Holiness** is the separation to God in uprightness, and it is this process (also known as sanctification) that the way is made toward blamelessness
- This isn't the only place that Paul prays these kinds of prayers - 1Cor1:8; Phil1:10; Eph5:27; Col1:22; 1Thes5:23 (also Jude24)
- This may at first seem like an unreasonable prayer; he is praying for **their perfection**
- It is because of passages like this that the teaching of "perfectionism" or "entire sanctification" arose
- The thought was that if Paul prayed it, then it is a real possibility – but notice the emphasis in the timing
- The key idea is found in the words "before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints"
- It is pointing to what we will be by grace at **the coming of the Lord Jesus** and His judgment
- Paul is possibly referring to the **parallel situation** that some of them would be facing of standing in a human court for judgment and being declared "guilty"; they were to be assured there was a way that they would be declared as blameless before the greater judgment of the Lord Jesus

When we come to appear amidst that vast assemblage of holy beings, the honors of the world will appear to be small things; the wealth of the earth will appear worthless; and all the pleasures of life beneath our notice. Happy will they be who are prepared for the solemnities of that day, and who shall have led such a life of holy love-of pure devotion to the Redeemer-of deadness to the world-of universal justice, fidelity, honesty, and truth as to be without reproach, and to meet with the approbation of their Lord. (Barnes)
- Though there will be a great jump in progress to perfection no matter where we are on the scale, the prayer is a prayer for **the process to already be going on in our lives**; to be becoming what will one day be perfectly and forever

Application: Do we dare pray such large prayers, and believe that this is what will take place in judgment?

- Will you pray such large prayers for your brothers and sisters?
- We can too easily be satisfied in merely the eventual climactic change; but those who have this hope...(1Jn3:2-3)
- The Christian's great desire is to be like the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. Everyone who has this hope is pursuing that goal in the here and now.
- Does your life evidence that hope and pursuit by what you are doing now? If not, do you really want to be like Christ? Have you truly trusted in the Lord Jesus, who not only delivers from the penalty of sin, but also its power.