

Prayer for Evangelism



Paul commands the Christians in Thessalonica to pray for them as they continue on their missionary journeys, and do the work of evangelism. Paul knew the importance of prayer as he went out to spread the Word of God. As he went out to preach the gospel, he was like a soldier going off to war, to fight against sin and contend for the faith of the gospel.

What were the things that he asked them to pray for?

PRAY FOR OUR CONQUESTS

“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:” (2 Thessalonians 3:1)

THAT THE WORD MIGHT HAVE FREE COURSE

Firstly Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to pray for him and those that were with him. He asks for prayer not for personal comforts or concerns, but only that the Word of the Lord may have free course. He was requesting that the Word of the Lord preached may be able to run freely, to go out and to save souls. As Isaiah 55:11 says, “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish

that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Indeed this ought to be the desire and prayer of every Christian - that the gospel would go out to all the corners of the earth so that all men would come to believe and receive the wonderful gift of salvation. This is the most important thing that could ever happen to a person – that he receives the gospel by faith. If we say that we care for people, and want the best for them, then we must pray that the Word of God would work in their lives, that the Word of God would have its free course. The only way which this can happen, is if we as God’s chosen vessels do our part in the work of evangelism, and if the work is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Therefore we must pray! Pray that God’s people will have the burden to go out to preach the Word, and pray that God through the Holy Spirit will bring faith to the hearts of those who hear the gospel being preached.

Are we hindering the free course of the Word by our reluctance and inactivity? Is the free course of the Word something that we constantly pray for?

THAT THE WORD MIGHT BE GLORIFIED

Secondly, they were to pray that the Word would be glorified. How would that happen? When the Word

is given free course, and it accomplishes that which God pleases, souls are saved, and lives are changed by the Word of God. That would indeed bear witness to the power of God, and the value of the Word of God. Thus God and His Word are glorified.

Paul elaborates by reminding that this is the same Word that is in them, and is glorified through their changed lives as well. And so this comes also as an encouragement and exhortation to them. They have all been saved by this same glorious gospel, and therefore should have a desire to pray that others would enjoy the same wonderful gift of salvation as well.

This ought to be the natural outcome of our own salvation. We would want to share the gospel, and pray for unbelievers. We must also pray that above all, God and His Word will be glorified. Evangelism is God's work, and it is all for His glory and not man's. We must rely on Him through prayer, and ensure that through our lives, our testimony, and the words that we speak, all glory is given to Him.

Has the Word of God been glorified in us? Are we glorifying or demoting God's Word by our actions and testimony? Are we praying that the Word of God be glorified in us?

PRAY FOR OUR DEFENCE

MEN ARE FAITHLESS

“And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.”

(2 Thessalonians 3:2)

As Paul and his fellow-labourers go out into the mission field, there would be those who would oppose them. They are described as *‘unreasonable and wicked men’*. They are those who oppose the faith, who would persecute Christians, and do all in their power to hinder the progress of the gospel. Paul faced such problems again and again, as he was constantly on the run from city to city, being chased out of one, and then arrested in another. The problem with these people, is that they have not faith. They are enemies of God, going against God and His Word. They do not understand the value and the wonder of the gospel. They do not realize their own spiritual condition, and they do not have faith to believe in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ! When you try to present the gospel to them, they would shout at you, lecture you, tear up the gospel tracts that you give them, ostracise you, humiliate you etc.

Paul experienced the worst of opposition. But that never deterred him. He was not complaining. His response was simply to request for more prayer! He asked that they may be delivered from these unreasonable and wicked men. He knew that the path before him would be full of danger, and therefore he needed the Lord's help. He knew that it was certainly the will of God for him to carry on in his mission work, and therefore he had the confidence that if God is with him, then he will surely succeed. By asking for prayer, Paul showed his complete faith in and reliance on God, to know that God is the one protecting and delivering him through each and every trial that he would face. We too, we must have faith to pray that the Word of the Lord would be able to go out to bring others to faith, and that God would deliver us from men who do not have faith.

When we think of evangelism, are we sometimes arrested by fear? Do we dread the potential opposition and persecution that would come our way? Pray!

BUT THE LORD IS FAITHFUL

“But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.” (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

In contrast to those faithless men, God is always faithful! What will enable us to stand against these wicked and unreasonable people is not our own bravado or courage, but the faithfulness of God! He is a God of promises, and a faithful God whom we can always rely on. He alone is the one who can stablish us, and keep us from evil.

Despite our many failings and shortcomings, despite the fact that often times we are unfaithful and wander away from Him to seek other gods, God is faithful. What we see illustrated for us in Hosea is the image of God as our faithful husband, and we are like the unfaithful spouse, who runs away from God and into a life of adultery. But God would be patiently waiting for us to return, with love He would go out to the streets to find us, to receive us back unto Himself. This is how faithful a God we have.

How Paul describes it here is that He will 'stablish' us, meaning He will set us up, fix us firmly, to prop us up when we are weary, to re-establish us when we fall. He will be the faithful one to keep us standing firm and close to Him, and also He will be the one who will keep us from evil. We can draw huge comfort and assurance from the fact that our God is a faithful God, who will always watch over

us, and never leave us nor forsake us. We will be able to face the problems of life with more courage and joy, knowing He is always there!

When we understand that our Lord is indeed faithful, it will greatly bolster our confidence in our prayers and service for Him. Knowing that the Lord is faithful, we will be able to pray with more boldness knowing that He will certainly answer. We will also be able to go forth to evangelise with more courage, and be less afraid of what these unreasonable and wicked men might do to us, for we know that our Lord is protecting us. Knowing God is faithful will indeed grant us the desire to live for Him and serve Him in all that we do, and motivate us to try to be more faithful to this God who is so faithful to us.

Realize that God is sovereign in evangelism. We must pray knowing that it is only He that can save souls and make our evangelism effective. All men's efforts, no matter how elaborate, will fail if it is not coupled with prayer and reliance on God. It is the Lord's faithfulness that will grant us success, and not man's vain efforts.

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