

Introduction

We are celebrating one of my most favorite holidays of the year, Thanksgiving. I love the opportunity to get together with family and friends. I love turkey and dressing, green beans, and all the other fixings that go with a Thanksgiving meal. Even if Thanksgiving did not have family, friends, and food, it would still be at the top of my list of favorite holidays because of what it stands for. Thanksgiving is a time to reflect on God's goodness in our lives and to return thanks to Him.

I want my life to honor God. There are lots of ways to honor God. He tells us that we should honor Him with our wealth, and from the first of all our produce. We should joyfully give Him our tithes and offerings, and it should be done before take care of any other obligations. We should give Him the very best offerings that we have. In Malachi, God tells us that a son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then, He asked, "Then if I am a father, where is my honor?" God's people were presenting the lame and sick to Him instead of their very best. They were not honoring Him with their wealth.

(Pr 3:9–10) "Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; {10} so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine."

(Mal 1:6–8) "'A son honors *his* father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?' says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?' {7} "*You* are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the Lord is to be despised.' {8} "But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the Lord of hosts."

In Psalm 50, God tells us two other ways of honoring Him. When we order our lives aright, it honors God. I want my life to be upright and to bring honor to God. God tells us still another way of honoring Him, and that is by offering a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Earlier in the Psalm God said that if He were hungry, He would not tell us. The whole world belongs to Him and there is nothing material or monetary that we can provide Him with. What God desires from you and I is a sacrifice of thanksgiving. He said, "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving." Thanksgiving is a special holiday to me because it honors God.

(Ps 50:23) "He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; And to him who orders *his* way *aright* I shall show the salvation of God."

(Ps 50:12–14) "If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all it contains. {13} "Shall I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of male goats? {14} "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High;"

Paul was a man that honored God. He was constantly giving thanks to God for the various churches that he planted. Paul was not alone in honoring God. Silas and Timothy helped write this letter to the Thessalonians, and they both honored God. Timothy's name means "one who honors God." They began this section by saying, "We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting." They gave three reasons why it was fitting for them to give thanks for the Thessalonians.

The Thessalonians were going through tremendous persecution and affliction. In addition to giving thanks for the Thessalonians, Paul comforts them, telling them that God will reward them for their faith, and will render righteous judgment on those who have been afflicting them. Paul ends the passage with three specific prayers for the Thessalonians.

Praises, Judgment, and Prayers

1. Proud Praises (2 Th 1:3-4)
2. Righteous Judgment (2 Th 1:5-10)
3. Persistent Prayers (2 Th 1:11-12)

(2 Th 1:3–12) “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater; {4} therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. {5} *This is* a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. {6} For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, {7} and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, {8} dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. {9} These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, {10} when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed. {11} To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, {12} so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. Proud Praises (2 Th 1:3-4)

Paul, Silas, and Timothy began by saying they ought always to give thanks to God for the Thessalonians. They said it was fitting, right, meet, or appropriate for them to do so. The Greek word that is used is *axios* (Strong’s G514), which means deserving, or suitable. This word or a form of this word is used several times in the passage, and in the NASB, it is translated as worthy. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to be worthy of their calling. Here, the fitting or worthy thing to do was to give thanks to God for the Thessalonians.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy did not just give thanks to God, they were proud of the Thessalonians and spoke proudly about them among the churches.

(2 Th 1:4) “therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.”

Recently, Karen and I were sent videos of some of our grandchildren. One grandchild, who is a sixth grader, set school records in cross country meets. The track coach could not say enough good things about her special talent in running. Her parents proudly shared the video with us. We are proud of our granddaughter also and I speak proudly of her accomplishments this morning.

Another grandchild was among a number of students that was admitted into the National Junior Beta Club, a special club for students that recognizes high academic achievement, exemplified worthy character, and a commendable attitude. Her parents proudly sent us the video so we could see her being inducted into this honor club and receive a certificate.

In the same way, Paul, Silas, and Timothy were proud of the Thessalonians, and proudly boasted to other churches about them. They gave thanks to God and they proudly boasted about them.

a. Their faith is greatly enlarged

Why was it fitting to give thanks to God for them? Paul gives three reasons why it was fitting for them to give thanks to God. The first reason was that their faith was greatly enlarged. These are new believers and they have taken off. Their faith has grown and they are doing well spiritually.

(2 Th 1:3) “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, **because your faith is greatly enlarged**, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater;”

As a parent I want to see my children’s faith growing and being greatly enlarged. I want them standing on God’s promises, and receiving their answers by faith. I want to see them applying the word of God in their lives. I want to see them living their lives with godly convictions. I want them taking a stand for Christ. I don’t want it to be based on their parent’s convictions, but based on their own faith, which is greatly enlarged. Paul, Silas, and Timothy had reason for giving thanks to God on behalf of the Thessalonians.

b. Love of each one toward one another grows even deeper

The second reason to give thanks to God was their love for one another had grown deeper. This is particularly meaningful to me because I think the greatest commandment is to love God with all of our heart, and the second greatest is to love our neighbor as ourselves.

(2 Th 1:3) “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, **because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater;**”

Jesus told His disciples, “a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” He said that by this love that we have for one another all men would know that we are His disciples. Love for one another is the earmark of the church. It is the distinguishing sign of a believer. Then, Jesus repeated this commandment in chapter fifteen, saying, “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.” The Thessalonians had heard the message, and their love for one another was growing even greater. When I see people serving one another, and loving one another in practical ways, it brings joy to my heart.

(Jn 13:34–35) “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. {35} “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

(Jn 15:12) “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.”

When I was preparing to plant our first church the Lord spoke to me while I was out running. My father and I were in North Houston, right by the Bush International Houston Airport, and I was taking my daily run. The Lord said that our church was to be a church that loved Him with all their heart, and they were to love one another. That became our vision. That was who we were and who we were going to become, a church that loved God and loved one another. The Thessalonians were that kind of church. They were loving one another, and their love was increasing. It is certainly fitting to give thanks to God for that.

c. For their perseverance and faith in the midst of persecutions

The third reason it was fitting to give thanks to God for the Thessalonians was that they were enduring persecutions and afflictions. These are new believers, and they had been put in the fire right away. Paul, Silas, and Timothy gave thanks to God for their perseverance and faith in the midst of all their persecutions and afflictions.

(2 Th 1:4) “therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.”

In the parable of the soils, the seed in the rocky soil immediately took off and grew, but because there was not much soil underneath, it did not get grounded and it withered away. When Jesus explained the parable, He said, “The one on whom the seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. The Thessalonians received the word with joy, but they were good soil. When persecution and affliction came, they had firm root and did not wither or fall away. Paul, Silas, and Timothy gave thanks to God and proudly boasted about them to other churches.

(Mt 13:5–21) “Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. {6} “But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.... {20} The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; {21} yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.”

2. Righteous Judgment (2 Th 1:5-10)

The Thessalonians are enduring tremendous persecution and affliction, and they are recognized and commended by Paul, Silas, and Timothy. When people are going through afflictions, they need to be comforted and encouraged, which is exactly what Paul, Silas, and Timothy do next. They said that the endurance through these persecutions and afflictions are a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment. That does not sound like comforting words, but they actually are. There are going to be two righteous judgments, a righteous judgment of the righteous and a righteous judgment of the wicked.

We are taught not to take our own vengeance and to leave room for the wrath of God. In Romans 12:19, God says, “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay.” The people that are persecuting and afflicting the Thessalonians are going to be repaid by God, and it is only just or fitting for God to render this righteous judgment on their behalf.

(2 Th 1:5-6) “*This is* a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. {6} For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,”

(Ro 12:19) “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.”

a. Righteous judgment of the righteous

In God’s righteous judgment of the Thessalonians, they will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God for which they are suffering. There is light at the end of the tunnel. There is a glorious ending to the suffering they are enduring. Paul, Silas, and Timothy are giving them hope about their future.

(2 Th 1:5) “*This is* a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.”

When people are going through suffering, it helps to focus on the joy ahead, rather than the present distress and discomfort. When Jesus was being beaten, mocked, scourged, slapped, spit upon, and crucified, He was in ultimate pain and discomfort. Scholars say the Roman crucifixion was the worst type of death possible. What was His focus in all this pain and suffering? In Hebrews we read that Jesus had the joy set before Him and endured the cross. What was that joy? I believe the joy was manifold. He was going back to the Father, where He would be seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Second, He had come to die for our sins and redeem us. He was going to bring Abraham, Moses, Jacob, and all the saints with Him into the presence of the Father. This was going to be a joyful celebration. Jesus was not focused on the pain and suffering, but on the joy set before Him. Paul, Silas, and Timothy are reminding the Thessalonians of the joy set before them; they are going to be considered worthy of the kingdom of God for which they are suffering.

(Heb 12:1–3) “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, {2} fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. {3} For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

The second encouragement they give the Thessalonians is that God is going to give relief to them. When you are suffering and enduring affliction, the news that you are going to get some relief from it is very good news. This had to encourage the Thessalonians. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were also under heavy affliction, and they said that God was also going to give them relief as well.

(2 Th 1:7) “and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,”

Unfortunately, there was a catch to when this relief was going to come. They said that they will receive relief when the Lord will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire. Paul is referring to the Day of the Lord, when Jesus returns. When Jesus returns, there will be a blast of the trumpet and a shout. This second letter to the Thessalonians is to bring some

correction to some erroneous things that they had heard about the Day of the Lord. When Christ returns, He will bring with Him the souls of those who are asleep. They will receive their resurrected bodies, and then those who are alive in the flesh will join them in the sky. That is when their relief will come.

On the day that the Lord returns, Jesus will be glorified in His saints, and will be marveled at among all who have believed. They will get relief and they are going to marvel at this spectacular occasion.

(2 Th 1:10) “when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.”

b. Righteous Judgment of the Unrighteous

On the Day of the Lord, the unrighteous are going to be judged righteously. Those that have been afflicting the Thessalonians will be repaid with affliction. When the Lord returns, it is not just to gather the elect from the four corners of the earth; it is also to bring judgment on the unrighteous. The unbelievers are not going to be aware or alert; it is going to be like a thief in the night, catching them by surprise. Destruction is going to come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

(2 Th 1:6-10) “For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,”

(1 Th 5:2-3) “For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. {3} While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.”

Those that have not obeyed the gospel will be dealt retribution. The Greek word that is translated as retribution is *ekdikesis* (Strong’s G1557), and it means avenge, punishment, or vengeance. On the day the Lord returns, He will take vengeance on those who have been afflicting the saints. They will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. This is not a temporary destruction; this is an eternal destruction. There are eternal consequences for those that do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. We need to be sharing the gospel with people because there are eternal consequences; there is the penalty of eternal destruction awaiting them.

(2 Th 8-9) dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. {9} These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”

3. Persistent Prayers (2 Th 1:11-12)

People think of Paul as the great apostle and teacher. Generally, when Paul is mentioned, they do not think of someone who was always laboring in prayer. Paul was an intercessor. Paul prayed fervently and persistently. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were all prayer warriors, and they said, “we pray for you always.” They were constantly praying for the Thessalonians. They understood the power of prayer. They understood the need for constant intercession for the churches. They understood that the kingdom of God is moved forward through prayer. They understood that

their weapons were not of the flesh, but were divinely powerful for pulling down strongholds (2 Cor 10:3-4). They encouraged the churches to be devoted to prayer (Col 4:2), and they also modeled this for the churches. They exhorted the churches to pray without ceasing (1 Th 5:17), and they prayed without ceasing. They prayed for the Thessalonians always.

(2 Th 1:11a) “To this end also we pray for you always...”

It was not just the Thessalonians that Paul and his team prayed for. In Philippians 1, he told them that he thanked God in all his remembrance of them, and always offered prayer with joy in his every prayer for them. He wrote the Colossians, “we have not ceased to pray for you...” He wrote the Ephesians that he did not cease giving thanks for them and making mention of them in his prayers. He wrote the Roman believers that he thanked God for them, and that he made mention of them always in his prayers. Paul was a busy man, preparing and teaching messages, preaching the gospel, developing leaders, planting churches, and writing letters, but he was a prayer warrior. He prioritized prayer and was devoted to it. He spent a lot of time praying for all the churches that he was working with.

(Php 1:3–4) “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, {4} always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all,”

(Col 1:9) “For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,”

(Eph 1:15–16) “For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints, {16} do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers;”

(Ro 1:8–10) “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. {9} For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the *preaching of the* gospel of His Son, is my witness *as to* how unceasingly I make mention of you, {10} always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.”

a. God will count you worthy of your calling

What did they pray for the Thessalonians? They prayed three things. First, they prayed that God would count them worthy of their calling. In their first letter to the Thessalonians, they exhorted, encouraged, and implored them like a father to his children to walk in a manner worthy of the God who called them. They had done their part to teach and exhort them to walk in a worthy manner. Now they pray for them to walk in a worthy manner.

(2 Th 1:11) “To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,”

As parents we can instruct and encourage our children, but we cannot make them do that, so we lay our requests for our children before God and let Him do His work in their lives. When we do that, we are co-laboring with God. I heard it said one time that when a potter is making a vessel, he has one hand on the inside of the vessel and the other hand on the outside of the vessel. As the vessel turns on the potter’s wheel, he applies pressure on both the inside and outside to

form the intended shape. God is the Potter and a pastor can exhort, encourage and implore people, but God is the One who has His hand on the inside of their vessel, shaping them into a worthy vessel.

(1 Th 2:11–12) “just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children, {12} so that you would walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

What does it mean to walk in a manner worthy of our calling? In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he implored them to walk in a manner worthy of their calling, and then he told them what that meant. They were to walk with humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, and being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Walking in a worthy manner is to live our lives with godly behavior. Walking in a worthy manner is to bear the fruit of the spirit in our lives. Walking in a worthy manner is to walk in love.

(Eph 4:1–3) “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, {2} with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, {3} being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

In Paul’s letter to the Philippians he exhorted them to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. In this case, the application was for them to stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. The Philippians had some conflicts going on, and this was not walking in a manner worthy of their calling. He wanted them to learn to live unselfishly and look out for one another’s interests, and not just their own. He wanted unity for them.

(Php 1:27) “Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;”

Paul prayed a similar prayer for the Colossians. He prayed that they would be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that they would walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. What would that look like? It meant that their lives would be pleasing to Him in all respects. It meant that they would bear fruit in every good work. It meant that they would increase in their knowledge of God. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to be pleasing to the Lord in all respects, and to bear fruit in every good work.

(Col 1:9–10) “For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, {10} so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;”

That is what God wants for all of us. He wants us to be pleasing to Him in all respects. He wants us to bear fruit in every good work. He wants us to live in unity. He wants us to walk in love and in the spirit.

b. God will fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power

The second prayer was for God to fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power. God wants our desires to be aligned with His desires. When we delight ourselves in the Lord, God will give us the desires of our heart, because they are aligned with His desires. His desire is for goodness in our lives. His desire is that we live a life of faith, because faith pleases God. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were praying that every desire that the Thessalonians had for goodness would be fulfilled. They prayed that their every desire for the work of faith with power.

(2 Th 1:11) “To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power,”

(Ps 37:4) “Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.”

Karen and I have a desire to see God move mightily. We desire to see an outpouring of His Spirit. We desire to see people healed of sickness. We pray regularly for God to move powerfully. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were praying that these same desires in the Thessalonians for the work of faith with power would be fulfilled.

In Psalm 20, David prayed the same thing. He prayed, “May He grant you your heart’s desire and fulfill all your counsel.” I believe that it pleases God when we desire good things and for the work of faith with power, and He wants to grant these heart’s desires.

(Ps 20:4) “May He grant you your heart’s desire and fulfill all your counsel!”

God tells us in Proverbs 13:12 that hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life. In verse nineteen, He tells us that desire realized is sweet to the soul. God wants us to be filled with life, and He wants our souls to be satisfied. We need to make sure that our desires line up with His desires, and that our desires are for goodness. He tells us that He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him, so we must delight ourselves in Him and fear Him, and He promises to fulfill these desires.

(Pr 13:12) “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.”

(Pr 13:19) “Desire realized is sweet to the soul, but it is an abomination to fools to turn away from evil.”

(Ps 145:19) “He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them.”

c. The name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you

Their third prayer for the Thessalonians was that the name of our Lord Jesus would be glorified in them, and they in Him. I think that is the desire that all of us have, that our lives would glorify God. When our lives are pleasing to Him, and honor Him, God is glorified.

(2 Th 1:12) “so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.”

In John 15, Jesus said, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.” We want to bear fruit in our lives so that God is glorified in our lives.

(Jn 15:8) “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and *so* prove to be My disciples.”

In John 17, Jesus spoke again about glorifying the Father. He said, “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.” Many people today do not even know what work God has given them to do; they don’t know their place in the body, and are not accomplishing the work that has been assigned to them. God wants us to know our calling, not just the call to be saved, but the calling on our lives. He wants to know our calling and to be fulfilling our ministries. When we accomplish the work He has given us, God is glorified.

(Jn 17:4) “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”

In Colossians 4, Paul encouraged Archippus to take heed to the ministry which he had received in the Lord so that he could fulfill it. We need to know our place of ministry, be equipped in it, and then work hard so that we can fulfill it. At the end of Paul’s life, he stated that he had fought the good fight and finished the course. Paul glorified the Father by accomplishing the work that had been assigned to him.

(Col 4:17) “Say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”

(2 Ti 4:7) “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;”

If you are ever wondering what to pray for people or churches, you can use Paul’s prayers. You will be praying according to the will of God for these people. They are an excellent resource for us to use. We should not only use his prayers as a template, we should use his life as an example. He was a prayer warrior, constantly praying for churches. His prayers reflect a heart of thankfulness in all things.

Conclusion and Applications

Paul, Silas, and Timothy started with, “we ought to always to give thanks to God...” We should start every day with that attitude. In Romans 11, he wrote, “who has first given to Him, that he should be paid back again?” Nobody has first given to God. God does not owe anyone for anything. He goes on to say, “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever, Amen.” We ought to always give thanks to God for everything in our lives. Paul had a heart of gratitude, something we should all try to imitate and cultivate. Giving thanks to God honors him. Giving thanks to others honors them. We should bless the Lord and forget none of His benefits. A holiday like Thanksgiving is a perfect reminder for us to reflect and give thanks to God for all the benefits that we have from Him.

(Ro 11:35–36) “Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? {36} For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.”

(Ps 103:2–5) “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; {3} who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases; {4} who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; {5} who satisfies your years with good things, *so that* your youth is renewed like the eagle.”

Paul, Silas, and Timothy proudly boasted to others about how the Thessalonians were enduring persecution and affliction. They did not fall away, but were good soil and bearing fruit. Their faith was being greatly enlarged, and their love was growing greater for one another.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy were not just thankful and proud of the Thessalonians; they had empathy for what they were suffering. They sought to encourage the Thessalonians. They told them it was fitting that they be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which they were suffering. They told them that God was going to righteously judge them and those that were afflicting them. God was going to give them relief when the Lord returns and is glorified in His saints. For those afflicting them, who had rejected the gospel message, they would be paid back with affliction, and they would pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord. There are eternal consequences for rejecting Christ as Lord.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy ended by praying for the Thessalonians. They prayed that they would be considered worthy of their calling, that they would fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, and that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in them.

Do you give thanks to God in everything? Do sense the need to always give thanks? How do you show thanks to God? How do you show thanks to others? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you ways of rendering thanks to God and to others. Ask Him to help you cultivate a heart of thanksgiving.

Do you try to encourage those who are suffering persecution and affliction? Do you send letters like this or notes or emails to them? When we gather, we are to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds and to encourage one another. We are to come prepared to encourage others. Do you take time to prepare an encouragement for someone in our gatherings?

Paul's prayer are great resources for us to use when praying for others. You can go through his letters and pick out his prayers and use them as templates for praying for people. They are great prayers, and are you can be assured when you pray them for people that you are praying according to the will of God.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for this passage. Thank You for the example of Paul, Silas, and Timothy. Thank You for the instructions that we get from Your word to us. Help us to be a grateful people with an attitude that we always ought to give thanks to You. Help us to forget not any of Your benefits to us. Help us to be people who encourage and build up others. Help us come prepared to encourage one another. Our times of assembly should honor You, and they are an opportunity for us to encourage others. Help us not to be focused on just what we can get out of the service. Help us come prepared to give to You and to others. Lord, help us to be a prayerful people. Help us to always pray for others. Help us to be a people who live lives that are worthy of our calling. We ask You to fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power. May Your name be glorified in us. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Praises, Judgment, and Prayers (2 Th 1:3-12)

Introduction (Pr 3:9–10, Mal 1:6-8, Ps 50:12-14, 23, 2 Th 1:3-12)

1. **Proud Praises** (2 Th 1:3-4)

- a. Their faith is greatly enlarged (2 Th 1:3)
- b. Love of each one toward one another grows even deeper (2 Th 1:3, Jn 13:34-35, 15:12)
- c. For their perseverance and faith in the midst of persecutions (2 Th 1:4, Mt 13:5-21)

2. **Righteous Judgment** (2 Th 1:5-10, Ro 12:19)

- a. Righteous judgment of the righteous (Heb 12:1–3, 2 Th 1:7, 10)
- b. Righteous Judgment of the Unrighteous (2 Th 1:6, 1 Th 5:2-3, 2 Th 8-9)

3. **Persistent Prayers** (2 Th 1:11-12, Ph 1:3-4, Col 1:9, Eph 1:15-16, Ro 1:8-10)

- a. God will count you worthy of your calling (1 Th 2:11–12, Eph 4:1-3, Php 1:27, Col 1:9–10)
- b. God will fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power (2 Th 1:11, Ps 37:4, Ps 20:4, Pr 13:12, 19, Ps 145:19)
- c. The name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you (2 Th 1:12, Jn 15:8, 17:4, Col 4:17, 2 Ti 4:7)

Conclusion and Applications