

1 Thessalonians Ch3v11-13 - Prayer Priorities

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[0 : 00] Psalm 1. We're just going to read Psalm 1 in preparation for what we're going to look at in 1 Thessalonians.

! Thank you for your prayers for me when I was away last week.

It was a thoroughly encouraging time meeting with fellow pastors, workers from around the world serving in very difficult and hard situations.

It was encouraging just to hear their stories of their faithfulness and their commitment and what God is doing through them. So I thank you for praying for me while I was away.

So let's read Psalm 1 together, then we'll turn to Thessalonians.

[1 : 04] Psalm 1. Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on his law day and night.

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.

Whatever they do prospers. Not so the wicked. They are like chaff and the wind blows away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Let's turn now to Thessalonians. This is what we're looking at currently in our series.

[2 : 19] 1 Thessalonians chapter 3. 1 Thessalonians chapter 3.

And we're going to be looking at verses 11 to 13, which is a prayer. A prayer that we can pray for one another and for the church.

And we're going to pray right now. Let's do that. Our Father God, we seek your blessing upon each one of us today.

That we would be those like the tree planted by streams of water. That flourish and become all that you cause and call us to be.

That we would live fruitful lives. Walking in your prides. Following your truth. Father, we need your help today.

[3 : 49] And we pray that as we look at your word. You would do a work in us individually. And together as a church. In Jesus name we pray.

Amen. Well if you could ask God for one thing. And you knew that God was going to give it to you.

What would you ask for? Just one thing. You can ask God for anything. And he's going to give it to you. What would you ask for? Or if you could ask God to bless a loved one.

And you knew God would do that. He would pour out his blessing upon someone you know. What would you ask God to bless them with?

Well most of the time when it comes to our prayers and our requests. Our focus is very often on physical and material desires.

[4 : 55] Lord give me better health and no more pain. Give me a better job so that I can earn more money.

Help my kids do well in school and get great results. And help them make the team and let them score lots of goals and be celebrated. Make my life less stressful and more productive.

Do you recognize any of those? Now I don't want you to misunderstand me. These are not wrong things to pray for. The Bible encourages us to pray about all kinds of things.

And that's what we were doing this morning. We were praying weren't we? For people's health. People's concerns. We're to pray about all sorts of things. But here's the point.

If that is the extent of our praying. If that is the sole focus of our request. Then we're missing out. Look at how Paul prays for the church.

[6 : 08] He's preached the gospel to them. And he's now concerned that they continue to grow and mature. So he prays not for their physical and material wants.

But for their spiritual and eternal needs. Not physical and material wants. But spiritual and eternal needs.

He prays verse 11 as we'll see. That their faith will be encouraged. Verse 12. That their love would be increased.

And verse 13. That their hearts would be strengthened. He asked God to bless them. With the very best of gifts possible.

Now before we look at these three prayer requests. In verses 11 to 13. We first need to remember who we're talking to. When we pray.

[7 : 10] When we're asking for blessing. Who we're talking to. So look at verse 11. Now may our God and Father himself. And our Lord Jesus.

Do you see who we're talking to? We're talking to our Father God. God is our Father. Now as we say that. That might bring all kinds of emotions to mind.

Depending on our experience of our earthly father. Maybe our earthly fathers were absent. Or weren't kind. Maybe they were very kind and loving.

Well the point is. Our God. Is our Father. Father. And he is always kind and loving. He's not distant.

But he's close and intimate. He's not far away. But he's accessible and personable. And God our Father is good. And generous.

[8 : 11] And loves to give good gifts to his children. But we're not just talking to our Father God. We're also talking to our Lord Jesus.

Jesus died. He rose again. And he is ascended into the place of all power. And all authority. He is ruling and reigning over all things and all people.

He has complete authority. And absolute supremacy. He is powerful. And he is mighty. So if this is the kind of person we come to.

What a privilege we have. That we. Right now. Are talking to our Father God. Who is good and generous. And our Lord Jesus.

Who is powerful. And mighty. We can come to him. Right now. With absolute confidence. And complete assurance.

[9 : 15] That as we ask of him to bless us. As we ask of him to give to us. He will do it. Imagine with me for a moment.

That you've been invited out for dinner. To a luxurious. Five star restaurant. And your host hands you the menu. Please.

Order what you want. Have whatever you like. Immediately your eyes scan the fillet of beef. Mmm.

And then. Oh my goodness. Lobster as well. Oh. What am I going to have? The waiter comes round. I think I'll have the soup of the day.

What? What? I mean. When you have the choice of whatever. Beef or lobster. You want soup of the day. And what will you have to drink?

[10 : 17] A water please. Well you would be daft. Wouldn't we? Why would we settle for soup of the day. When we can have beef or lobster.

Or whatever it is that you particularly like. Well in praying terms. Paul is ordering the beef. Or the lobster.

He's asking God to bless the church. With the very best of all. Father. Encourage their faith. Lord.

Increase their love. Strengthen. Their hearts. Let's not settle. For soup of the day. Let's receive.

The very best of blessings. That God our Father. Our Lord Jesus. Wants to give. To our church. Today. So three blessings.

[11 : 15] We're going to ask the church for. And for. One another. It's really quite simple. So my job is not to complicate.

What's very simple. First. Pray. That God will encourage. Our faith. Verse 11. Now may.

Our God and Father himself. And our Lord Jesus. Clear the way. For us. To come to you. Now. Why does Paul.

Pray. For this opportunity. To be able to come. To the church. Well remember. Right at the very beginning. Of our studies. We learned that Paul. Had come to the church.

And then he had to leave. Because of persecution. And opposition. And he left. This. Newborn church. On their own. So look at chapter 3.

[12 : 10] Verse 2. So what did he do? Chapter 3. Verse 2. We sent Timothy. Who is our brother. And co-worker. In God's service.

In spreading the gospel. Of Christ. To strengthen. And encourage you. In your faith. So that not one of you. Would be unsettled.

By these trials. By the trials. Of persecution. Verse 5. For this reason. Because of these trials. When I could stand it no longer.

I sent to find out. About your faith. I was afraid. That in some way. The tempter. Had tempted you. And that our labors.

Might have been. In vain. Verse 10. So night and day. We pray most earnestly. That we might see you.

[13 : 04] Again. And supply. What is lacking. In your faith. Now. May our God. And Father himself. And our Lord Jesus.

Clear the way. For us. To come to you. Can you. Can you see. What's happening there. Because of the trials. Paul is desperate. To be able.

To get to the church. So we praise. Lord. Make it possible. Clear the way. All the obstacles. I want to get to the church. Why? So that I can encourage them.

In their faith. So that I can supply. What is lacking. In their faith. Now isn't that a great. And wonderful prayer. To pray.

Father. Enable me. Lord. Help me. To encourage. Someone. In their faith. Today. You see.

[13 : 58] If you're a Christian. You're not. Immune. To trials. You could be the only. Follower of Jesus. In your workplace. Or in your family. Or in your social peer group.

And that can be really hard. Or maybe. You're here. And you're going through. A season of doubt. You're wondering. That because of the sickness. You have. You're wondering.

Does God really love me? Does God really care about me? Maybe you're struggling. With some kind of sin. And you're just battling. Day after day.

And you seem overwhelmed. With guilt and shame. You see. Each one of us here. If we could all tell our story. We all come.

With a particular trial. Could be a broken relationship. It could be an ongoing illness. Struggle of loneliness. Fear of the future. We can come.

[14 : 55] Battered and bruised. Sometimes lost and broken. And we have no energy. Within ourselves. To be able to pray. In other words. Don't we all need.

Someone. Who can come alongside us. And encourage us. In our faith. Don't we all need that?

So how are we going to encourage. One another in the faith? How do we supply. What is lacking? Well. We take each other.

Back to the word. Of God. Look at chapter 2. Verse 13. This is a. Like a little summary. Of how the church.

Responded. When Paul taught them. The word of God. So verse 13. This is chapter 2. And we also thank God.

[15 : 51] Continually. Because. When you received. The word of God. Which you heard from us. You accepted it. Not as a human word. It wasn't made up.

But as it actually is. The word of God. Which is indeed. At work. In you. Who believe. You see.

They heard it. They accepted it. And now he's saying. Look. Continue to receive it. Because it's a. Living. An active. Word. It's a word.

That does a work. In your life. So. We need people. We need one another. To come alongside us. To continually speak. God's word.

Into each other's lives. To take God's word. And to pray that word. Into our life. For our good. And for our blessing.

[16 : 47] Because it's as we're in God's word. That God. We read that God loves us. Cares for us. Forgives us. Helps us.

Never leaves us. And when we fall and fail. Will pick us up. And help us on. You see. We need. People.

Like Paul. Verse 10. Chapter 3. Verse 10. Who night and day. Pray. Pray most earnestly. That we will see you again.

And supply. What is lacking in your face. Now may God. And Father himself. And our Lord Jesus. Clear the way. For us.

To come to you. Isn't that great? That someone. Has been praying. For you today. That they could draw alongside you.

[17 : 42] And encourage you. And the good news is. We can all. Be encouragers. Like this. Let me give a few examples. Of how we can do this.

I've. I've mentioned this book before. And I think it's great. I've used it. It's called. I'm praying for you. By Nancy Guthrie. And what she does.

Is she just puts. A verse of scripture down. Has a few comments. About the scripture. And then turns it all. Into a prayer. And you can send that prayer.

To somebody. To say. This is what I am praying. For you. To encourage them. In their face. Another way. We can draw alongside.

Each other. And encourage one another. Is what we're going to do. After our gathering. This morning. We're going to have. Tea and coffee. Wouldn't it be great. If we could come alongside.

[18 : 38] Someone and ask them. How is your faith? How are you getting on? How's your walk. With the Lord? Is there something. That I can pray for you?

Tell me. And I will pray for you. This week. Or maybe. It's that the Lord. Is giving you. A word. From scripture.

That you can share. With somebody else. And say to them. This is on my mind. This is on my heart. I want to share this with you. To encourage you.

In your walk. And relationship. With God. So first. We can pray. That we would be. Encouragers. Of one another.

In our faith. Second. That we would ask God. To increase. Our love. Let's read verse 12.

[19 : 36] Now may the Lord. Make your love. Increase. And overflow. For each other. And for everyone else.

Now love. Is the most. Easiest thing. In the world. To do. When we get on well. With someone. Isn't it? It's easy. It's easy. To love.

Other people. When that person. Loves you back. But love. Is really hard. When the other person. Is really annoying.

And really frustrating. I mean. Just look at me. I know. I am the most. Lovable person. Not. I know.

That I can be. Really difficult. To love. All the time. You just need. To ask my family. That. I can say. And do things.

[20 : 30] That get people's backs up. I'm a sinner. I fail. And mess up. So it won't. Always be easy. For you. To love me.

And for me. To love you. That's why. We need. To pray. Verse 12. That we would. Love.

Each other. And. Everyone else. The everyone else. Here. Is not just those. In the church. But those. Who had persecuted. Them.

As Jesus himself. Had said. Love your enemies. And pray for those. Who persecute you. So love. Was to be a mark. Of the church. And we're never.

Going to encourage. One another. Another. In the faith. If we don't. Love one another. Well. And left. To ourselves. Well.

[21 : 25] I'm only ever. Going to really. Love myself. That's why. I need to pray. This prayer. And why. We all need. To pray it together. Verse 12. May the Lord. Make your love.

Increase. And overflow. For each other. And. For everyone else. So wonderful. Prayer. Father. Father.

Fill me with your love. Fill me to the brim. Fill me to the top. So that. I will. Overflow. With your love. To everybody else.

Because love. Isn't something. That I can conjure up. Within myself. Oh. I must love more. I must love more. No. It's a gift. From God. It's a supernatural.

Work of God. That he must do in us. To enable us. To love. One another. So what's this love. Going to look like. Well look at what he says.

[22 : 23] At the end. Of verse 12. He said. May this love. Overflow for each other. And everyone else. Just as ours. Does. For you.

So Paul is saying. Look. I want you to have. The same kind of love. That I have. For the church. Well what's that love.

Look like. Well look back at chapter 2. Verse 7. Here Paul describes. His. His. His feeling. His heart.

For the church. Chapter 2. Middle of verse 7. He says. Just as a nursing mother. Cares for her children. So we cared for you.

Because we loved you. So much. We were delighted. To share with you. Not only the gospel of God. But our lives as well.

[23 : 21] What. What a beautiful picture. Of love. A mother. Caring for her infant child. Nursing. Looking after.

A mother. A mother. Sacrificially. And unconditionally. Gives. Time and time again. For their child. Giving of her life.

To support and care. And Paul is saying. This is my love for the church. Look at verse 9. He says. Surely you remember. Brothers and sisters.

Our toil. And hardship. We worked night and day. In order not to be a burden. To anyone. While we preach the gospel of God.

To you. He worked hard for them. He sacrificially. Gave of himself. For the betterment. Of the church. Church.

[24 : 15] Now I'm grateful. I'm thrilled. To be part of a church family. That's gathered here today. That loves. One another.

I can say that. You love. One another. And the way in which. That love is expressed. Is by encouraging. One another.

And by praying. For one another. We pray that love. Would overflow. From our life. Let me try and illustrate this.

With this bottle of water. Imagine. This bottle. Is you. There's something inside it. And what's ever inside of it.

Is going to come out. So as we go about. Our day to day lives. We will literally. Bump into one another. People will say things to us.

[25 : 14] They will jostle against us. And. We'll respond. Won't we. With the things they say. And the things they do. And. Oh. It comes out. Doesn't it?

Well my question to you is. And to me. Is what. Comes out. When people nudge us. And jostle us. Something is going to come out.

Will it be bitterness? Will it be anger? Will it be rage? Or will we be so filled. With the love of God.

That when we're jostled. And nudged. That what will. Flow out of us. Is the love of God. You see. We take each other.

Back again. To scripture. To look at the amazing love of God. We read about it in Ephesians 1. Who loved us before the foundation of the world.

[26 : 11] Adopted us into his family. Forgives us. What amazing love. Lord. Fill me with your love. Increase that love. To the brim.

So that I will just overflow. With love. To one another. So we pray for encouragement of our faith. We pray for the increase of love.

We pray third. That our hearts would be strengthened. Verse 13. May he strengthen your hearts. So that you will be blameless and holy.

In the presence of our God and Father. When our Lord Jesus comes. With all his holy ones. Now this isn't talking about our physical hearts.

That are inside our chest cavity. That pump blood around our body. And keep us going. No. When we're talking about the heart. When scripture talks about heart.

[27 : 14] It's a way of describing your true inner self. Your heart. Is the control center of your life. From our hearts.

Flow our desires and decisions. What's in our hearts. Flow out. Remember the bottle. If there's love within our hearts. It will flow out of our hearts.

So when Jesus says. I am humble and gentle in heart. He's saying. Gentleness and humbleness. Is at the very core of my being.

Our hearts are like a rudder of a ship. That directs our ship. One way or the other. Our hearts will direct our lives.

One way or the other. Now the problem is. I have a heart problem. My heart is weak. It's not strong. And my heart can direct me away from God.

[28 : 16] To other things and other people. Scripture reminds us. That the heart is deceitful above all things. In other words. I give in to temptation.

So often. The pressure comes on. And I want what I desire. And I seek what I want. Chapter 3 verse 5.

Wasn't that their concern? Chapter 3 verse 5. For this reason. When I could stand it no longer. I sent to find out about your faith. Why?

I was afraid that in some way. The tempter. Had tempted you. And their labors might have been in vain. You see temptation comes along.

Alongside us. And it causes us. To turn away from God. And it can come out of nowhere. When we least expect it. It may happen simply like this.

[29 : 16] Johnny. Why should you love that person? I mean. After all that they've done for you. They don't deserve it. The things that they said to you.

Don't love them. Just tell them what you think. And you'll feel much better. Or. Johnny. Why should you go out of your way.

Of encouraged. To encourage that person. When have they ever encouraged you? Don't bother praying for them. Go watch the telly.

You'll feel much more restful. God. And just like that. Our hearts. Are turned. Our hearts are weak. That's why we need to pray.

Verse 13. May he strengthen. Our hearts. Strengthen our hearts. For what reason? Verse 13.

[30 : 13] That we will be blameless. And holy. In the presence of our God. When our father. Our Lord Jesus. Comes. With all his holy ones. Now being blameless.

And holy. Doesn't mean that we reach. A state of perfection. Rather. It's a relentless pursuit. That we would become. More and more. Like the Lord Jesus. As we wait.

For Jesus. In other words. We're living a life. That pleases him. And we don't do these things. To earn our salvation. Rather. It's the evidence. That we are trusting.

In Jesus. So as we wait. For Jesus. To come. We pursue. What pleases him. So how do we.

Strengthen. One another's hearts. How do we. Spur each other. On to be holy. And blameless. As we wait. For Jesus. Well let me.

[31 : 09] Give you an example. Think of a bride. Getting ready. For her wedding day. She gets. Ready. But it's not just.

The bride. Is it? I mean. She's got a whole team. Around her. An army. A legion. Of people. Running here. There. And everywhere. One to do the hair.

Another one to do the makeup. Somebody to do nails. Someone to do dresses. Someone to do flowers. And on and on and on. It goes. Oh I need a drink of water. Someone do this. Someone do that. They're all there.

To help her. Get ready. For the groom. It takes an army. Of people. Now verse 13. Is telling us.

We're getting ready. To meet Jesus. We are to be holy. And blameless. For when he comes. But you know what. I can't do that alone.

[32 : 07] Because I can't trust myself. So God has given to me. An army of people. He's given me a church family. Gathered around me.

To help me. To strengthen me. In my walk with God. So that I will pursue. A life that is holy. And blameless. And one that is beautiful. You're responsible.

For helping me. To become more beautiful. As I wait for Jesus. And I the same for you. God has given us. One another.

To keep us accountable. To call one another. To find out how we're doing. To encourage us in the faith. To increase our love. To strengthen our hearts.

So these are the things. We are to pray. So what will all this mean for us. In Carragoline Baptist Church.

[33 : 06] Well three real simple applications. First. Align our prayers. To God's desires. Rather than pray for the things.

That we want. And we desire. We pray for what God says we need. And how do we know what God says we need? What he tells us in the Bible.

What we have here in chapter 3. Verses 11 to 13. What a difference. It would make. If we all prayed this prayer. Before we came on a Sunday morning.

Father. Help me. That when I come. That I will encourage someone. In their faith today. Father. Father. Increase. Your love.

In my life. So that I will overflow in love. For. Whoever. Father. Would you enable me. And help me to strengthen.

[34 : 04] My brother or sister today. So let's align our prayers. To the prayers of God. What's on his heart. Second.

We come humble. And dependent on God. You see the truth is. I can't affect any change in my life. You can't change your life. And we can't change one another.

That's why the prayer. Verses 11 to 13. Is all directed to our Father God. And our Lord Jesus. That he. Would clear the way.

That he. Would make our love increase. That he. Would strengthen our hearts. I can't do it. We come in humble dependence.

On our Father God. And say to him. Will you do the work. That we cannot do. Encourage our faith. Increase our love. And strengthen our hearts.

[35 : 06] And then third. We meet with others. To pray. We can pray on our own. But church is a family.

And we need to hear each other. Pray for one another. On Wednesday just passed. We gathered as a church family. To pray. To pray for our community.

To pray for one another. To open up our hearts. And what a wonderful encouragement. To hear people. Pray for one another. And for what's going on.

We need one another. And God has given the gift of you. To each other. So that we can pray. For one another. It's very simple isn't it?

So why don't we. Pray that. Right now. Let's keep our Bible open. You can read along with me. I'm going to start in verse 11.

[36 : 06] And read to verse 13. And as we pray. In your minds. Pray this prayer. For somebody.

This morning. Let's pray. And we'll read it together. Now may our God and Father himself. And our Lord Jesus.

Clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase. And overflow for each other. And for everyone else. Just as ours does for you.

May he strengthen your hearts. So that you will be blameless and holy. In the presence of our God and Father. When our Lord Jesus comes. With all his holy ones.

And all of God's people said. Amen. Well we're going to sing together aren't we? Amen.

[37 : 04] Amen. Amen. What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear.

What a privilege to carry. Everything to God in prayer. It's a reminder of the wonderful privilege it is. That we can talk to God.

Let's stand together. As we sing. And pray this prayer. Amen.