

“The Gospel and Prayer”  
2 Thessalonians 3:1  
(Preached at Trinity, August 30, 2020)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 2** ended with Paul's benediction, his blessing upon the church.  
“May God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ comfort and strengthen you.”  
We might expect the word “Amen” and the close of the letter, let's move on.  
But Paul had several other matters to address.
2. **Chapter 3** begins with Paul's final words of admonition – “Finally brethren . . .” which introduces Paul's final words before bringing his letter to a close.  
\*Pray for us, \*stay away from unruly brothers, \*work in a quiet fashion and eat your own bread, \*do not become weary in well-doing, \*stay away from those who will not receive sound instruction.
3. Paul begins by imploring them to pray for him. He uses the imperative – “Pray for us.”  
Paul was a man of prayer. He knew the importance of prayer. He prayed constantly.  
**2 Timothy 1:3 NAU** - "I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day,"  
**Philippians 1:3-4 NAU** - "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all,"
4. Prayer was an essential aspect of Paul's life because he understood that his prayers were effectual—that God heard and answered his prayers.  
What was the basis of Paul's confidence in prayer? The answer is in **Verse 3**  
**2 Thessalonians 3:3 NAU** - "But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil *one*."
5. Knowing that prayer was essential to his ministry he often admonished others to pray for him. He understood how dependent his work was upon the intercession of the brethren.  
**Romans 15:30-31 NAU** - "Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, <sup>31</sup> that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and *that* my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints;"  
**Philippians 1:19 NAU** - "for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,"  
**Colossians 4:2-4 NAU** - "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*; <sup>3</sup> praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; <sup>4</sup> that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak."

**Ephesians 6:19-20 NAU** - "and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

6. There are a couple of important truths as we consider this passage.
  - I. The Gospel is the power of God put on display
    - A. Paul's great desire was that the Word would spread rapidly - quickly.
      1. The word used here is from τρέχω which is a word referring to haste.  
**Matthew 28:8 NAU** - "And they left the tomb quickly"  
**1 Corinthians 9:24 NAU** - "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win."
      2. The Gospel always carries a sense of urgency. This is no time for delay. Souls hang in the balance.
        - a. Our great danger is to become consumed by this present age – by the endless distractions of your life.  
The late Keith Green wrote a song titled, "Asleep in the Light"  
*"Do you see, do you see All the people sinking down Don't you care, don't you care Are you gonna let them drown How can you be so numb Not to care if they come You close your eyes And pretend the job's done"*
        - b. We must maintain a Kingdom priority
      3. The picture is of the Word of God marching forth as in a race, a race it is guaranteed to win.
    - B. Paul added, "And be glorified" or declared glorious.
      1. Paul is talking about the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation. God glorifies Himself in the Gospel. It is the means by which He delivers lost sinners from the wrath to come
      2. The Gospel is a mighty, unstoppable power.
        - a. Paul referred to it as the "Power of God unto salvation"  
**Romans 1:16 NAU** - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."
        - b. It is not dependent upon our oratory skill or our clever programs.
      3. Paul had personally witnessed the power of the Gospel. He had traveled from town to town and witnessed the hatred of the depraved soul towards God. He had personally suffered at their hand. He was often driven out of town. But in the midst of the unmitigated fury of their hatred, multitudes were being saved.
      4. Paul had seen this with the Thessalonians  
**1 Thessalonians 1:5-6 NAU** - "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. <sup>6</sup> You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,"

5. Paul wanted to see the Gospel continue to go forth mightily just as it did with the Thessalonians.  
**2 Thessalonians 3:1 NAU** - "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you;"
6. This verse is not disconnected from the previous chapter.  
**2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 NAU** - "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. <sup>14</sup> It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."
  - a. Paul describes clearly the harmony of God's sovereignty and human responsibility.  
 In **Chapter 2** Paul describes God's sovereignty – God has chosen you to salvation as an act of His sovereign grace.  
 But He has chosen faith as the means of grace – “faith in the truth”
  - b. Over and over we find both God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. God's powerful Gospel and man's duty to receive it. Jesus declared God's sovereign work in **Matt 11**  
**Matthew 11:27-28 NAU** - "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*."  
 And then immediately commands men to come.  
**Matthew 11:28 NAU** - "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."
  - c. Some might argue that if God has chosen us unto salvation, He will save us apart from prayer or preaching. Why should we pray or witness? Because God has ordained the means of salvation. Paul reminds us here that prayer is one of the means ordained by God for the promulgation of the Gospel.
  - d. It is because God has chosen His elect unto salvation that we pray boldly for their salvation.

## II. We have a duty to pray for the success of the Gospel

- A. Paul commands, "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you;"
  1. Again, the Gospel is not dependent upon our oratory skill or our clever programs. But prayer is essential for it to march forth quickly and powerfully and gloriously. Every pastor is dependent upon the prayers of faithful brothers and sisters.
  2. The Gospel depends on prayer. When the people of God cease praying the Gospel is greatly hindered. It will cease to work powerfully in the hearts of sinners. Pastors need to understand this, church members need to understand it, parents need to understand it.

3. But you say, I thought salvation is a work of God. How can God be hindered from saving His elect people? Yes, salvation is a work of God's grace alone. But God has ordained all of the means to bring about the salvation of the lost. God is sovereign but the Gospel must be preached. And God's people must pray.
4. The Bible describes several aspects of the importance of prayer for the success of the Gospel.
  - a. The Gospel demands prayer for laborers  
**Matthew 9:38 NAU** - "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."
  - b. The Gospel demands prayer for opportunities  
**Colossians 4:2-3 NAU** - "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*; <sup>3</sup> praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word"
  - c. The Gospel demands prayer for unction – for God's power upon it.  
**Ephesians 6:19-20 NAU** - "and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."
  - d. The Gospel demands prayer since there is a natural hatred of it by the men of this world.  
**2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 NAU** - "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you; <sup>2</sup> and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith."
5. Preaching depends on prayer
  - a. Vocational pastors must devote themselves primarily to two things: Prayer and the ministry of the Word
  - b. Preaching rests upon the pillar of prayer. Preaching is a supernatural activity. An old Scotch pastor described it: "There is somewhat in preaching that cannot be ascribed either to matter or expression, and cannot be described what it is, or from whence it cometh, but with a sweet violence it pierceth into the heart and affections and comes immediately from the Lord."<sup>1</sup>
6. Churches must pray for the preaching of their church – for the preacher, for themselves, for each other.  
E.M. Bounds: "Salvation never finds its way to a prayerless heart. The Holy Spirit never abides in a prayerless spirit. Preaching never edifies a prayerless soul. Christ knows nothing of prayerless Christians. The gospel cannot be projected by a prayerless preacher."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edward M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer*, ([www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org) Public Domain), page 43.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. page 52.

7. Everything we do as Christians depends on prayer.  
Paul is urging these Christians to pray – “brethren, pray for us. . .”  
He needed prayer that God would bless his labors; that the wickedness of the hearts of men would not hinder the Gospel.  
That the Gospel would march forth with power and haste.
- B. We must pray. Paul states it as a command
1. Prayer is an activity of the saints. We are commanded to pray and to pray without ceasing. And yet, even the utterance of our prayers is dependent upon God.
    - a. Prayer does not originate within ourselves.  
**Ephesians 6:18 NAU** - "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit,"  
**Jude 1:18-20 NAU** - "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." <sup>19</sup> These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. <sup>20</sup> But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit"
    - b. Prayer is a human activity but is dependent upon the Divine initiative. Only then can we say that prayer is effectual.
  2. The great revivals of history began with fervent prayer. But what was the source of the fervent prayer? The God who is sovereign in revival is also sovereign in stirring His people to prayer.
  3. Ian Murray wrote: “God has chosen to make prayer a means of blessing, not so that the fulfilment of his purposes becomes dependent upon us, but rather to help us learn our absolute dependence upon him.”<sup>3</sup>
  4. This means if we find our prayer life weak and stagnant we should pray that God would kindle within us the fire of prayer. That we might be people of prayer.

#### Conclusion:

1. Paul’s great desire was to see souls saved. Is that your desire? Do you have a heart’s desire for the lost to be saved?
2. Are you praying diligently for the lost around you? Are you speaking the Gospel of Christ to lost people?
3. Are you praying for the Gospel to go forth with power at Trinity?  
"pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified"

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<sup>3</sup> Iain Murray, *Pentecost Today, The Biblical Basis for Understanding Revival*, (In conjunction with the Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh: Founder’s Press, 1998), page 69.