

## Paul's Prayer For The Thessalonians

“Now, may our God and Father himself, and the Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you: and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you; to the end that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints” (1 Thess. 3:11-13).

There is scarcely an epistle of Paul's in which he does not express his prayer for those to whom the letter is addressed to and that practice of the apostle was begun in this first of his letters. He has already informed them of his continued prayers for them. Now he writes a prayer he expresses for their progress and likewise to include personal requests they were to make for him.

He prayed that the Father will “direct our way unto you.” None should be surprised that Paul would ask the Father to make it possible for him to return to Thessalonica. He has already mentioned the grievous nature of their parting (2:17) and the fact that at least twice he wanted to make a return visit to them but was not able because “Satan hindered us” (2:18), so it was but natural for him to pray God would make it possible for him to visit these brethren once more.

Paul knew that it was needful for new converts to have a “follow-up” in teaching and encouragement, just as a newly-germinated seed needs nurturing and watering. While there is no record that Paul returned back to Cyprus (the scene of his first journey of evangelism with Barnabas, Acts 13-14), the sacred record does tell us that Barnabas made such a return effort on that island (Acts 15:39). But, other cities of Paul's labor in that first journey (Lystra, Derbe) were often visited by the apostle. Yet all things are subject to the “Lord's will” and Paul willingly subjected himself to that. It is not likely Paul was able to revisit Thessalonica on this second journey of his, but he did spend some time in Macedonia at the conclusion of his third journey (Acts 20:1-2) and spent some time throughout the region. Thessalonica was in Macedonia and we are certain that he both visited those brethren and was cheered by the progress he saw they had made in his absence from them.

Paul prayed also that God would make their love toward each other and toward all men increase and abound. Increasing in our love toward one another just makes sweeter and dearer the fellowship we share in Christ. I was never so unfortunate that I suffered the loss of father and mother to serve Christ — to the contrary, it was through my parents' teaching and example that I came to profess Christ myself. But through the years, additional older Christians became as fathers and mothers to me. I remember, with gratitude and love, the tremendous help I received from older Christians: Homer and Myra Bloodsworth, Abshire and Ruby Chesser, and C. L. and Clara Purdom. These three couples were of great encouragement to me and Betty at various times and places in our lives. Hopefully, we have passed to others the strength and love we in turn received.

Paul wanted the Thessalonians' love to increase and abound toward "all men." He wrote the Galatians, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, specially those of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). We can scarcely be children of God if we have no love for all humanity, and care for all of those we can.

By showing and practicing love, our hearts can be established and unblameable and holy at His coming. May by this we show we are children of the Most High God!

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