

I THESSALONIANS 3:6-10
RESULTS OF PRAYER!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Thessalonians chapter 3 as we continue our study through Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica. As we began our study in this chapter of I Thessalonians we said that this chapter is focused upon ***HOW THIS CHURCH WAS ESTABLISHED!***

And as we saw last week, the church was established through godly men who spoke forth the Word of God! That is so important for us to understand. Unless you take in a diet of spiritual food, you will not grow spiritually!

You need sound doctrine, healthy doctrine to grow by. We see this idea of sound doctrine or healthy doctrine spoken of by Paul in Titus 2:1, where he wrote, "**But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine.**"

Think of it like this. I can have a banana, which is healthy for me, it is good for me. But, if I add to that banana, five scoops of ice cream, a boat load of chocolate syrup, I have taken what is healthy, what is good for me, and I have made it unhealthy for me. Yes, it is good, but it is not beneficial to me.

Now please don't leave here saying, "Pastor Joe said I can't have a banana split anymore because it is not good for me!" I didn't say that, I am just giving you an example of what can be good for us, healthy for us, and we can make it unhealthy!

Now, apply that with the Word of God. The Word of God is good for us, it is healthy but when we start to add worldly ideas, worldly wisdom, the philosophies of this world, we have now taken what is good and added that which is not healthy for us, spiritually speaking and in the end, it will hurt us!

And we do see that so much today. Don't water down the Word of God, don't add to the Word of God, speak it forth and let the Spirit of God open the Word of God up to your heart and your life!

That is how the church in Thessalonica grew, they were established in the faith by godly men who taught them the Word of God.

And yes, there are times, and I believe we are living in them today, when people don't want to hear the Word of God any longer. They want their ears tickled. But listen to what Paul said in II Timothy 4:1-5, **“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”**

In other words, people don't want to be convicted of sin. They want to hear positive messages that affirm what they are doing is okay. But it doesn't matter what people want, at least that is what Paul is telling Timothy and the Holy Spirit is telling us!

He tells us to “**Preach the Word!**” Give them what they need and not necessarily what they want! And think about that for a minute. Would you let your children eat banana splits every day? Of course not because it is not healthy for them. You give them what they need, not what they want.

And the interesting thing is that many times, what they didn't want at first, they end up liking and eating and I think the same is true with the Word of God. People may not want to hear it at first but if you continue to share it, teach it, their lives will be open to what God is saying and they will desire more of it! That is what happened to me. Before I got saved I did not know what I was missing because I never tasted the Word of God. But once I got a taste of the Word, I couldn't get enough of it. And I pray that hunger to know God, to know God's Word never goes away!

Now that is how the church was established in Thessalonica, by godly men who spoke forth the Word of God!

This morning we are going to look at the second point on how this church in Thessalonica was established and, as we will see, it is ***THROUGH PRAYER***. And so, as we go through these verses this morning we will be looking at the ***RESULTS OF PRAYER*** or what we see happening in the lives of these new believers!

Let me share this story with you regarding prayer because I do believe prayer is important. We should pray for others and we should pray for our own needs, and we will see that in our study this morning, how prayer changes lives! We are told,

Have you ever watched how a bird sleeps on its perch and never falls off? How does it manage to do this?

The secret is the tendons of the bird's legs. They are so constructed that when the leg is bent at the knee, the claws contract and grip like a steel trap. The claws refuse to let go until the knees are unbent again. The bended knee gives the bird the ability to hold on to his perch so tightly.

Is this not also the secret of the holding power of the Christian? Daniel found this to be true. Surrounded by a pagan environment, tempted to compromise with evil, urged to weaken his grip on God, he refused to let go. He held firm when others faltered because he was a man of prayer. He knew the power of the bended knee.

From sleeping birds we can learn the secret of holding things which are most precious to us - honesty, purity, thoughtfulness, honor, character. That secret is the knee bent in prayer, seeking to get a firmer grip on those values which make life worth living. When we hold firmly to God in prayer, we can rest assured He will hold tightly to us.

- A Treasury of Bible Illustrations

How true that is! The power of prayer in our lives. But what about the Word of God? Listen to this and you will see what we need to do with God's Word. We are told,

A man was seated on a park bench when a little chap of about five sat down beside him and started winding what appeared to be a most prized possession - a watch. "My, what a pretty watch," remarked the man. "Does it tell you the time?"

"No sir," replied the boy; "you gotta look at it."

God's Truth is everywhere, but you must look for it and at it to see it.

- A Treasury of Bible Illustrations

Again, how true that is. The Bible does you nothing sitting on your desk, you must open it up, read it and ask God to help you to glean from it what He desires! Prayer and the Word of God was needed here in Thessalonica so that they can grow and the same is true for us if we want to grow.

With that as our background, let's begin reading in I Thessalonians chapter 3 beginning in verse 6 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

I THESSALONIANS 3

VERSE 6

Keep in mind that what we see manifested in the lives of these Thessalonian believers is a result of godly men who spoke forth, taught them the Word of God and prayer as we see here in verse 10, that Paul prayed for these believer's night and day!

Keep in mind that Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to see how they were doing. He wanted to go and see them but, as we are told in verse 18 of I Thessalonians chapter 2, **"Satan hindered"** him!

So, as Paul is in Corinth Timothy returns and tells Paul how these believers were doing. And that report encouraged Paul and he is writing these believers to encourage them! It is as John said in III John 4, **"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."**

The encouragement of seeing those you have led to the Lord grow in the faith and continue on in the faith! It encouraged John and it encouraged Paul!

Spurgeon wrote, “Never is the servant of God so full of delight as when he sees that the Holy Spirit is visiting his hearers, making them to know the Lord, and confirming them in that heavenly knowledge. On the other hand, if God does not bless the Word of his servants it is like death to them. To be preaching and to have no blessing makes them heavy of heart: the chariot-wheels are taken off, and they drag heavily along: they seem to have no power or liberty.” How true that is!

And Paul tells us that Timothy brought back “**good news.**” It is the Greek word, EUAGGELIZO, (yoo-ang-ghel-id’-zo) and in every other occurrence in the New Testament, this word refers to the gospel message or the message of salvation that is by grace through faith!

So how does that fit in here? I think the idea is that the basis for their new life is Christ and, of course, that is good news, that is great news! It is as Paul said in Romans 1:16, “**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.**”

And it is after they are saved we see fruit born in their lives. And Paul lists four things here that show that they were Christians, it showed the fruit that was growing, the life they were living!

First of all, Paul speaks of “**faith**” and it is the Greek word, PISTIS, (pis’-tis) and it speaks of an assurance or belief. And the idea here is their reliance upon Christ for salvation, that is where their faith was at and that faith was manifested in their lives.

Now why was their faith even in question? Because of the persecution that these new believers were facing. You see, persecution can cause us to drop out, to lose hope, to walk away and Paul was concerned that this might happen to them.

We are told in I Thessalonians 2:14, **“For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans.”**

You see, they faced intense persecution from family, from friends, at work, during their leisure time because the light of God shined through them and exposed the darkness of these unbelievers and they did not like it and they persecuted them!

Also, listen to what Paul said in I Thessalonians 3:1-5 about what these new believers faced in Thessalonica. We are told, **“Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.”**

The main reason Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica is to see how they were doing. He was concerned that the persecution they were facing would destroy their faith! He did not want their faith to be shaken by the things that were coming upon them.

In fact, Paul warned them when he was with them that they would face this persecution just as Paul and Silas and Timothy faced it.

And isn't that true? We face a little persecution and our faith is starting to shake, we are not ready for it! And this can come from the unsaved as well as the saved. Someone says something to us that offends us and we are ready to give up, throw in the towel, what is the use!

I know I have shared this with you many times over the years but it is an important verse. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 15:58, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be firm (steadfast), immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord [always being superior, excelling, doing more than enough in the service of the Lord], knowing and being continually aware that your labor in the Lord is not futile [it is never wasted or to no purpose].”**

Yes, difficult times will come but don't let those difficult times shake your faith. Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might!

Maybe you have heard of the story of the killer rabbits? No, well, let me tell you because it does have to do with faith. We are told,

A counselor at church camp told of his experience with a nine-year-old boy who started to cry when they turned out the cabin lights the first night. “Was he afraid of the dark?” the counselor asked. “No,” the boy replied; “he just didn't want to be attacked by the ‘killer rabbits.’” Some older kids at home had told him that there were “killer rabbits” who would come out at night and attack the campers.

Jesus was constantly reassuring the disciples with the words, “Fear not.” Their fears betrayed their lack of faith. When one traces these words and their usage throughout the Bible, it seems that one of man's constant needs is to be reassured of the presence and comfort of God almighty. Christians can draw on this presence to find comfort and destroy their fears.

Watch out for “killer rabbits!” They can destroy your peace of mind at camp and throughout life.

- A Treasury of Bible Illustrations

How true that is, killer rabbits will destroy our faith. Remember what John said in I John 4:4, **“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”**

Perspective is everything and when we realize that God is for us, then we will also understand that no one can truly be against us and win. Yes, people will come against us, we will be persecuted for our faith, but God is with us and thus, whatever happens in our lives is not a loss, but it is a gain for God’s plans and purposes will come to pass! We just need to walk by faith and not by sight, trusting in Him, that is faith!

So the first point is that their faith was strong!

Next, Paul speaks of their **“love”** and he uses the Greek word AGAPE, (ag-ah’-pay) which is an unconditional love, it is a love that can only come from God. This is not a worldly love, not at all!

The best way to see this kind of love is to look at Jesus and what He did for us. We were stiff-necked, rebellious people, at war with God and yet, we see God’s love for us as He went to the cross of Calvary to pay in full the penalty for our sins. We did not deserve this kind of love and yet, Jesus freely gave it to us and that is what agape love is all about.

Paul gives to us a definition of this kind of love in I Corinthians chapter 13 beginning in verse 4 as Paul tells us what agape love is all about. He wrote, “**Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. . . .**” I Corinthians 13:4-8. That is agape love, unconditional love!

Now think about it. I am being persecuted, put down by people and now God is telling me I am to love those people? Exactly! That is not fair! It is not a matter of being fair. Agape love gives and gives and gives, and it expects nothing in return.

I have seen this so often in marriage relationships where one person feels they are not getting what they deserve and they want out. That truly is not love. That is just being selfish. And I am not saying it was easy, but was it easy for Jesus to go to the cross of Calvary for us? Absolutely not, and yet He did! Did we deserve that kind of love? Absolutely not, and yet He still went!

These Thessalonian believers were giving and giving to those that did not deserve it and it was a tremendous witness to those unbelievers who were persecuting them and for believers, it strengthened their faith as they watched how they lived out their faith!

Let me share with you how this is played out and like I have said, this kind of love is not easy, it is not worldly, but it is from above and thus, we must surrender to God and allow His love to flow not only into our lives but through our lives to touch others. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

An Armenian nurse had been held captive along with her brother by the Turks. Her brother was slain by a Turkish soldier before her eyes. Somehow she escaped and later became a nurse in a military hospital.

One day she was stunned to find that the same man who had killed her brother had been captured and brought wounded to the hospital where she worked. Something within her cried out “Vengeance.” But a stronger voice called for her to love. She nursed the man back to health.

Finally, the recuperating soldier asked her, “Why didn’t you let me die?” Her answer was, “I am a follower of Him who said, ‘Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you’” (Luke 6:27).

Impressed with her answer, the young soldier replied, “I never heard such words before. Tell me more. I want this kind of religion.”

- A Treasury of Bible Illustrations

And let me say this. The kind of love spoken here is not born out of a religion, it is born out of a relationship with Jesus Christ! Paul spoke of this in Romans 5:5, “**Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**” This love is from God and not us and thus, like I have said. You can’t manufacture it, but you can allow God’s love to flow in you so that His love may flow through you!

So, we not only see the faith of these believers in the midst of persecution, but we also see their agape love towards those who were persecuting them. And I guess you can say that this is the proof of someone’s conversion, their agape love!

The third point is seen in their having a good remembrance of Paul, Silas and Timothy! In other words, they trusted them in spite of the persecution they faced. In spite of the false teaching that was going around. In spite of the false accusations that were made.

I do find that interesting. Several years ago we had a group of people leave the church because of something that was said of me, which wasn't true. What was interesting to me is that most of them did not sit down and talk with me, they listened to this person. I thought that was very sad.

For Paul, these believers did not listen to that but remained faithful to Paul, Silas and Timothy. They saw how they were faithful in the work even as they too were facing persecution for their faith. They did not give up and that encouraged these believers.

The fourth point is that they longed to see Paul. And the reason was Paul's tremendous love for them. In I Thessalonians 2:7-12 we see this played out for us as we are told, **“But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”**

Paul loved them and they loved Paul and longed to see them. As you can see, these young believers were growing in the faith. You see, their changed lives were manifested outwardly and it was seen as Timothy reported back to Paul of their, “**... faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you.**”

VERSE 7

What we see here is that their faith brought encouragement to Paul. That tells me that Paul had those days when he was down, beat up, discouraged. When Paul wrote his letter to the church in Thessalonica he wrote it from Corinth and even coming to Corinth there was much difficulty for him.

In fact, Paul said in I Corinthians 2:3, “**I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.**”

Thus, as down in the dumps as Paul was, this good news lifted his spirits knowing they were doing well. It is as Proverbs 25:25 tells us, “**As cold water to a weary soul, So is good news from a far country.**”

For me as a pastor, there is great joy seeing God working in you and through you. To hear you talk about your faith, how you are sharing your faith, the things you face in life and how you handle them, that just encourages me so much.

Does that mean I get down? I guess I do at times, like all of you. But coming together, fellowshiping, listening to you share your love for Jesus, blesses my heart and encourages me that all that I do for the Lord is not in vain, it is never in vain.

I know, that is what God's Word says, but sometimes you need that manifested in the lives of people to see it, to be encouraged by it. I am not saying that we go by outward circumstances for our faith, we go to the Word of God. But it is the Word of God manifested in the lives of people that also encourages us.

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

Edward Steichen, who eventually became one of the world's most renowned photographers, almost gave up on the day he shot his first pictures. At 16, young Steichen bought a camera and took 50 photos. Only one turned out - a portrait of his sister at the piano. Edward's father thought that was a poor showing. But his mother insisted that the photograph of his sister was so beautiful that it more than compensated for 49 failures. Her encouragement convinced the youngster to stick with his new hobby. He stayed with it for the rest of his life, but it had been a close call. What tipped the scales? The vision to spot excellence in the midst of a lot of failure.

- Bits & Pieces, February 4, 1993, pp. 4-5

I can't tell you how much we all need to be encouraged. When I was getting ready to graduate high school, barely but I did, one of my counselors was talking to me about my plans for after high school. And this is what he told me, "You will never make it in four-year college, you need to go to a tech. school or something like that."

Now I am not putting down a tech. school, but if you know me and technology, things like that, it is really pretty funny because I am sure that after I attended for a while there would be signs on the school with my picture and a big X on top of it not allowing me in.

But in regard to what happened here, I really didn't say anything, I think I was shocked by what he was saying to me. He didn't even give me a chance to make it, he just told me that I would never finish a four-year college and in my mind, what he was telling me was that I was a "Loser!"

Talk about discouraged. I know I did not do too well in school, but I just didn't want to go. But college was different, I had to pay for it. And as discouraged as I was, I did turn it around and was going to show him that he was wrong and I could do it.

I don't like giving up that easy and when someone says you can't do it, well, I try to prove them wrong. Hopefully that is a good thing! But I did go to college and my grades were very good and I got my Registered Nurse degree!

I hope that if God has placed upon your heart to do something that I have encouraged you to go for it. And if you go for it and it does not work out, that you pick yourself up and you look for what God is showing you next. Be encouraged and may we encourage others by our faith as these Thessalonian believers encouraged Paul.

VERSE 8

Next, we see Paul saying that their steadfastness in their faith brought life to Paul. It is more than just encouragement, it brought joy, it raised Paul up! And I like that.

In fact, when Paul speaks of these believers and says that they "**stand fast**" it is the Greek word, STEKO, (stay'-ko) and it was a military term that spoke of not retreating in the face of danger or an attack. They were strong in the faith and they just brought life to Paul. You see, it not only encouraged him but it brought life to him. What joy we can bring to others as we live out our faith and we stand fast in what we believe in!

Peter put it like this in I Peter 4:12-13, **“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”**

In other words, stand fast in the faith because trials will come upon your life to test your faith. And what God is doing in you with these trials is testing your faith, helping you to grow. But, on the other end of the spectrum the Devil is tempting you to sin. Stand fast in the faith, trust in the Lord, understand that God is working in you so that He can work through you!

We need to be determined in the faith, strong in the faith and not give up. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

A young fellow wanted to be a star journalist but lived in a small town (not much possibility). One day the dam upstream broke and the town was flooded. He got in a rowboat and headed out to look for a story. Found a lady sitting on her rooftop. He tied up the boat and told her what he was after. (They both watched as various items floated by). She says, “Now there’s a story.” “No, that’s not a story.” Finally a hat floats by and then does a 180 degree turn, goes upstream a ways and does another 180 degree turn, etc. The fellow says, “There’s a story.” “Oh no, that’s not a story. That’s my husband Hayford. He said that he was going to mow the lawn come hell or high water!”

- Source Unknown

Remember one of David's mighty men named Shammah? In II Samuel, 23:11-12 we are told of this mighty man of God, **“And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. So the people fled from the Philistines. But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. So the Lord brought about a great victory.”**

Here we see the Philistines causing trouble for the children of Israel. They were very smart with their strategy. They would wait to attack their enemies until it was harvest time. And then, when all the work was done, they would swoop down and take the fruits of their enemy's labor, the grains and-so-on. Here we see that there was a piece of ground that the captain of the guard gave Shammah to watch over and protect.

“What was this piece of ground that he was to guard?” you ask. Did it hold all kinds of gold, maybe silver or precious stones? Not really. It had a bunch of lentils or beans there and that is what Shammah was to guard against the attack of the Philistines. “Shammah, go and save the beans” and he meant that literally!

Now I don't know what you are thinking right now, but for most if not all of us, we are probably thinking, “Is it really worth risking my life for a field of beans?” Good question. And yes, if it were something that was better, more important, more valuable, of course we would risk our lives for that, but for beans, really? And that is what the rest of the soldiers also thought, and they left, all except Shammah!

And as Shammah defended this piece of ground, protected the beans, God brought about a great victory against the Philistines. I like the attitude of Shammah. He was called to guard the beans and no matter how insignificant that might be; he was going to be faithful in service to his King, David. He stood his ground and defeated the Philistines. That is what God has called us to do no matter how insignificant it may seem to us, it is important to God! Remember what we are told in II Chronicles 16:9, **“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. . . .”**

Who is God looking for? Is He looking for strong men? Maybe He is looking for wealthy men? Or maybe He is looking for educated men? What about good-looking men? No, the Lord is looking for faithful men, those who are willing to guard the beans you might say and do it faithfully, no matter how insignificant they think the task is! He is looking for those who will stand fast!

Does that mean it will be easy? Absolutely not, it was not easy for Shammah, but he did it faithfully and look at the victory that God gave to him because he was faithful in service while everyone else fled!

God never said it would be easy, but that He would be with us every step of the way, even when we are protecting the beans! Paul, tells us this very thing in I Corinthians 15:58, and this is from The Amplified Bible, and we have looked at this verse already but it is powerful, so we will look at it again. Paul tells us, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be firm (steadfast), immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord [always being superior, excelling, doing more than enough in the service of the Lord], knowing and being continually aware that your labor in the Lord is not futile [it is never wasted or to no purpose].”**

Like I have said, your service to God is never in vain; it is never worthless or insignificant, even if you are just guarding the beans. Shammah understood that and was faithful in his service to his King and may we be faithful in our service to the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ! It is as Paul said in Colossians 3:23-24, “**And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.**”

And I guess you can say for the man cutting the lawn that was underwater and for Shammah, that is determination! But folks, if we believe all that God’s Word has to say. If we believe all that Jesus has done for us. Then why are we afraid to say it or to live what we say we believe? We need to stand strong in the faith to encourage other believers, to bring life to those believers who are struggling and to shine the light of Jesus to those that don’t know Him.

You see, if you are wishy-washy about your faith, then who is going to believe what you have to say? No one and you will not encourage anyone! As Paul said, “**For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.**”

VERSE 9

Once again, we see that Paul rejoiced in their faith. I hate to say this, but that is not what many people rejoice in. You see, some people find it easy to rejoice in the *material* prosperity in the life of others, but Paul honestly rejoiced in the *spiritual* prosperity of others.

You see, all the material possessions will pass away and what is left is the spiritual possessions you have built up in your life. Paul tells us that very thing in II Corinthians 4:16-18, **“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”**

In other words, all that is physical is perishing, it is moving from order to disorder, it is falling apart, wearing out. But what is eternal is the inner man and that should be built up each and every day!

And Paul speaks of **“light afflictions”** which really are not light for Paul and yet, when he compared what he was going through to eternity with the Lord, they were nothing. These things would pass away quickly!

May we have that kind of heart, that rejoices in the faith of others. That rejoices in what God is doing in other believers lives! I think we lose that joy when we focus on ourselves and not the Lord and what the Lord is doing. We focus on the material instead of the Spiritual.

Let me share this with you and you will see that perspective is everything. We are told, As a third-century man was anticipating death, he penned these last words to a friend: “It’s a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians - and I am one of them.”

- Today in The Word, June 1988, p. 18

Paul praised God for the faith of these believers in Thessalonica because it was not just all about him. He focused on the Lord and what the Lord was doing in people’s lives and in that he could rejoice.

VERSE 10

As you read through these verses it sounds like these Thessalonian believers were doing very well. So, if they were doing so well why was Paul praying for areas they were lacking in? Because none of us are perfect and to be complacent means you are spiritually dead, you are not growing!

And here is why so many Christians are not growing in the Lord. They are not praying and they are not being taught, studying the Word of God. And I think both are seen here in verse 10.

Paul prayed for them night and day, “**exceedingly**” and that was important. Morris picks up on this word, “**exceedingly**” and shows us what depth of prayer was given by Paul for these believers. He wrote, “There are various ways of expressing the thought of abundance, and this double compound is probably the most emphatic of all.” (Morris)

But he also wanted to see them face to face so that he might teach them even more. Yes, his letter will instruct them, but how much the more if he can personally talk with them, answer their questions and-so-on.

And here’s the thing. If you think you have reached your goal, that you are complete or have reached the point where you don’t need to grow anymore, you have an issue of ***PRIDE***, thus, you have not been made perfect yet.

None of us have. Listen to what Paul had to say about himself in Philippians 3:12-16, **“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.”**

Paul is telling us that he is not perfected yet, God is still working in his life and with all the failures that has come upon him, he does not give up but he ***PRESSES ON!*** I like that. Keep your eyes on Jesus, allow Him to work in you so that He can work through you.

And as you are growing in the Lord, take what you have learned and apply that to your life. In other words, walk worthy of the high calling by which you have been called!

So, the Word of God along with prayer helps us to grow as we are taught the things of God and with the power of prayer, we are enabled to live accordingly!

And I want to close with this thought. I would like you to pray for each other. I think that is so important. Pray for the leadership of this church. Pray for the ministries here at Calvary. Pray for the missionaries we support. Pray for the radio station. Pray for each other.

I know, I have already said that but I think we need to be reminded to pray for each other. We need prayer, we are in a spiritual battle and we should be praying for each other. Take the church phone list and every day pray for people on the church phone list.

I will close with this to show you how important prayer is. We are told,

A minister was praying at the bedside of a dying woman. "Wait a moment," she said, as he started to rise from his knees. "I want to pray for you." Very tenderly she prayed with her hands upon his head. "For ten years, ever since you became my pastor, I have offered that prayer for you every morning and night," she told him. The minister went away with tears in his eyes and a strange warmth in his heart. He had known that this woman was sweet-spirited and true, but he had never guessed that he had a place in her prayers day and night. "I wonder how many of my six hundred members pray for me," he asked himself. Let us remember others in our prayers even as we want others to remember us.

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

THE POWER OF PRAYER! THE RESULTS OF PRAYER!