

## THE BOOK OF FIRST THESSALONIANS

### "Prayer of Missionary for Nationals"

1 Thessalonians 3:11-13

#### Introduction

1. Throughout this chapter, Paul has been concerned for the spiritual welfare of the Thessalonians. It was their "faith" which really grabbed him. He longed that they might genuinely exhibit Christ and salvation. What a heart he had for them.

2. His major concerns have been expressed. These included his interest in their suffering, temptation, hospitality, steadfastness, and growth in the Lord. With that expression of concern behind him, Paul now turns to prayer. It is simple but deep. He has some specific items he shares with them. Here they are:

#### 1. DIRECTION v. 11.

The thought here is this: may it please the Lord to bring me to see you.

a. How? It was not that he expected to get there on his own, but with the help of God. The words "God" and "Father" are conjoined by the term "Himself." Christ is joined with this initial phrase obliquely. The prayer is addressed to both. The verb is singular. Christ is joined with the Father in providing direction. Hence, the deity of Christ is definitely taught. One might well render the phrase, "But God Himself, even our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you." There is depth here worth diving for!

b. What? Paul wanted his way directed to them. The verb means "to straighten" (cf. Luke 1:79). Whatever might be done, Paul wanted to get to the Thessalonians. He prayed God to do this with a straight path.

c. Where? Paul had many options and alternatives in which to live his life. At this juncture, he had but one consuming passion--get to Thessalonica (cf. Rom. 1:10; 15:32).

#### 2. PROGRESSION

The thought here is this: Paul longed that the believers might really move forward in the arena of love.

a. How? Again the source of real supply is the Lord. This is probably a reference to Christ. But whatever, it points again to His deity (cf. 1:8; 5:2 with 3:13; 4:15). He prayed that the Lord might cause an increase and an

abounding. The former means to superabound (cf. Rom. 5:20; 6:1) and the latter means to exceed or go beyond. Nothing is to be static in the Christian life.

b. What? The issue is love. It is only known by the action which it prompts. It is not the sort of love of affection, but the deliberate choice made without any assignable cause, save that which lies in the very nature of God Himself. It is really a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). This love is to move in two directions: toward believers and then to all men (John 13:34; Gal. 6:10; 1 Thess. 2:14). Love is an evidence of being born again (1 John 3:14; 4:7,8,20,21).

c. Why? Paul had shown love toward them. Hence, when they would manifest love, it would be a following of the example set down (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 4:9). Love had characterized their behavior (cf. v. 6) and to this Paul agreed (4:9,10; 2 Thess. 1:3). But he prays here that it might increase and abound. What concern!

### 3. INTENTION

The thought here is this: Paul's prayer looked to the end of things.

a. What? The ultimate purpose of the prayer was that the believers might be "steadfast, set, fixed" (cf. Luke 16:26). This was one item Peter was expected to perform (Luke 22:32). If anything is clear in the Word, it is that God desires His own to be steady and not wavering.

b. Where? The word "unblamable" means to be without fault (Mark 7:2; Rom. 9:19; Heb. 8:8). Paul wanted them to be without charge no matter what the charge would be. The sphere of operation for this was to be "holiness." This adds the dimension of character to the entire matter. This thought is also expressed elsewhere (Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 4:3).

c. When? The ultimate goal of Paul's prayer relates to the time when the Lord returns at His second coming to the earth, for it is "with all His saints." This, therefore, is at the end of the tribulation and prior to the millennium (Rev. 19:11-16).

Conclusion There are prayers and then there are prayers. Looking at this one, there is no doubt but what Paul had a burden for the believers whom he had led to Christ. He longed to see the work at Thessalonica flourish until the end. So be it in all the work of the Lord everywhere.