

Prayer and Perseverance | Jacob Grass

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[0 : 0 0] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Well, good morning everyone.

Good morning. It's good to be here. The last time I spoke at Bethel, I was speaking to my phone. So it's good to be here in person and to talk.

And if I tell a joke, then I can actually tell if you guys are laughing or not. Seems like they always kind of fall flat over Zoom, if you know what I mean.

So if you want to turn with me to 2 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, we're going to be looking in chapter 3 today. This was kind of a struggle for me. I was asked a couple weeks ago to share, and all the slots had filled up for September, October, November.

And then Dave was like, hey, we've got a spot on the 23rd. I was like, I guess I'll take it. And I didn't have much time to prepare. And it seemed like the things I was preparing, God didn't want me to share.

[1 : 1 0] And so I was just wrestling with, oh man, God, what do you want me to share? I was looking at, you know, maybe I should share on John 4. Or maybe I should go to Psalm 119. And I was praying like half messages, like all the time.

And then God kept saying, you know what, I actually want you to share on this. And this is from my, just my daily reading as I was reading through the Bible in a year. This is what stood out to me.

And I think hopefully it will encourage you. It really has encouraged me. And we'll see where the Lord takes it. So we're going to have four points. Number one, we're going to be looking at prayer. And it's going to be pretty broad. And there's a lot of big topics here. So we're going to kind of go surface level on some of them, maybe some we're going to dive deep into. So we'll see how it goes. So number one, we're going to look at prayer. Number two, we're going to look at persecution. Three, properly positioned. And then our last one, we're going to look at practice, how we apply them.

[2 : 1 1] And so we're going to be in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3. And we're going to be looking at verse 1 through 5. We might touch on verse 4. But the main are 1, 2, 3, and then verse 5.

So let's go ahead and read. And then we'll pray and we'll dive into it. So 2 Thessalonians 3, verse 1. Finally, brothers, pray for us that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men.

For not all have faith, but the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things we command.

May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. God, we just come before you today. And we're thankful for this opportunity, once again, to meet in person, face-to-face, Lord.

And this morning, Lord, just learn about your Son and remember him and what he did for us on the cross. And knowing that he came to earth and died for us, Lord, thank you for that.

[3 : 2 6] I pray now that you would speak through me and that the Holy Spirit would be working. In your name I pray, amen. So I want you guys to kind of evaluate yourself as we're going through this message and take what you need.

Take what convicts you. And I hope we go out encouraged, convicted, ready for the week. So let's start. Number one, prayer. We see that in verse 1.

Finally, brothers, pray for us. And so when Paul says finally, he's not, this is not a negative. He's not like, oh, finally, I'm done. He's saying, finally, brothers, like this is important.

This is the last thing. Let's focus on it. He says pray for us. So number one, we need to be asking for prayer. Think of Paul. If you put yourself in his shoes in this time, he's almost like a spiritual giant among men.

You know, one of the only apostles besides those who walk with Jesus. He wrote a good chunk of the New Testament, like 13 books. You know, Hebrews, we don't know.

[4 : 28] The one, he's the one who endeavored, you know, four missionary journeys. And he has an outstanding and unique testimony. You know, the Lord came to him on, you know, we all know it in Acts.

The Lord came to him on the road to Damascus and blinded him. And that's how he, you know, realized that Jesus wanted him and was calling him, you know, Paul, Paul, why are you persecuting me?

And yet, even though we have this spiritual giant among men, Paul still realizes his inadequacy as a man. He still realizes that, yes, I have done great things for the Lord and I've had a great revelation from the Lord, but he still realizes his inadequacy.

He humbly sought prayer from others because he knew that his reliance must be on God. So, let us do the same, no matter how spiritually advanced we are.

And what do I mean by humble? Well, if you think the, if you take the Thessalonians in general, if you look through 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians, you'll realize that these were not seasoned believers.

[5 : 39] These guys were struggling with things. That's why Paul had to write a second book of Thessalonians, because he had to address certain things. He had to address the day of the Lord. People were coming in and confusing them.

And so, these believers, you know, maybe some were older, maybe seasoned, I don't know. But for the most part, these are younger believers. And Paul is saying, hey, I want prayer from you guys. What a humble decision, or what a humble approach that Paul is taking to ask for prayer from younger believers, from people who, you know, in my eyes, as a human, I would see as a lesser. You know, if I was in Paul's shoes, you know, and just looking at it, like Paul is up here and, you know, younger believers down here, he's just such a great man of faith. But he humbles himself, and he asks the church of Thessalonica to pray for him.

So, we see that we need to be asking for prayer from, you know, our brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter their spiritual advancement, how much of a veteran they are, whatever you want to call it.

[6 : 45] So, that's number one. We need to ask for prayer. But number two, we see this call from Paul to pray. So, what's the response? Well, it's to pray. So, when people ask us to pray, let us, you know, go forward and pray.

So, what does it mean for us? We need to start praying. And I know that sounds really simple, but we have to ask ourselves, who? Who are we praying for? I was reading a commentary on this, and I've listened to a lot of, a few preachers on this particular topic.

And they said, you know, how encouraging it is for them as pastors to hear that people are praying for them during the week. You know, praying for the people who are going up here to speak during the week.

Praying for the Sunday school teachers. And, you know, I had to ask, stop and ask myself, you know, how often do I pray for the person who is, you know, giving the message of here during the week as they prepare?

You know, not just that the word would go through them, but before that the Holy Spirit would still be working in them then. And I think that's a big thing. You know, even our Sunday school teachers, people leading the Bible studies.

[7 : 51] Like, there's a lot of people we can pray for. And I think, for me personally, prayer a lot of times is about me. And I don't think that's how God designed it. And, yes, it's a way to talk to God, but we need to be praying for others.

You know, our elders, our deacons, our, you know, as I mentioned, our Bible study leaders, our brothers, our sisters, our family, you know, unbelievers. There's a lot, there's a lot to pray for. And if you never have anything to pray for, then I think you're lying. Because I think there is always something to pray for. And the people of Thessalonica, let's look here. Verse 1, pray for us, okay? And then that the word of the Lord may speed ahead or run ahead of you and be honored as happened among you. And the church here knew exactly what to pray for because Paul's told them

before.

And so I'm just going to flip back. You guys stay there. I'll flip back. And in 1 Thessalonians 2, and this goes right along with it, chapter 2, verse 18 says this.

[8 : 59] Because we wanted to come to you. This is Paul. I, Paul, again and again. But Satan hindered us. And we look forward in 311. This is 1 Thessalonians.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all as we do for you.

So that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. So Paul has addressed this before.

You know, he says we want to come for you or come and visit you, but we've been hindered. And then he says, may God direct our ways to you that you may increase and abound in love.

So these same principles that we're about to learn, they learned before in the first letter that Paul wrote them. And so let's move ahead and look at what it means to speed ahead.

[9 : 57] Essentially what I get from this, where it says may the Lord speed ahead and be honored there in verse 1, is saying may God be the forerunner, the one who clears the way and the one who allows the gospel to swiftly run unhindered.

Let me read that again. May God be the forerunner, the one who clears the way and the one who allows the gospel to swiftly run unhindered. And then he says this weird thing that I didn't quite understand at first, but it says that it may be honored.

And another word for honored is glorified. And so essentially what he's saying is that the word of God may be glorified. What does that mean? Well, glorified by people believing it and applying it.

So what we see here is that may God be the forerunner, the one who clears the way, the one who allows the gospel to swiftly run unhindered, so that it can be glorified by people believing it and applying it, as happened among you.

And so these, if you look in the next part, and he says, and you have received this. It's happened among you. You've seen the power of the gospel. You've seen the power of God's word. Just as you have had this revelation, right?

[11 : 12] This big church had this revelation, the people of Thessalonica, and they came to know the Lord just as you did that. Now go preach.

And what he's saying is, okay, now pray. Pray for others that they've received this revelation, that they receive the word, that it goes forward swiftly. And I feel like often we forget what God has done for us.

We forget the love he showed for us, you know, sending his son to die for us on the cross, you know, just the daily, you know, giving us food, giving us, you know, a house, whatever it is.

And we forget what God has done. And it's important to remember, as he says, what happened among you? What happened to you?

You know, when you were dead in your trespasses and sins, what happened to you? You were made alive together with Christ, for by grace you were saved. And we can dwell on that. We really can. So let's not forget what God has done.

[12 : 11] And lastly, Satan has no power over God's word. Satan doesn't have any power over God's word. But he will attack it.

He will deny it. He'll use people to add to it and subtract from it. But Satan's main attack are on his proclaimers, on us.

That's who Satan wants to attack because he can't really touch the word, right? But he can attack the people who are proclaiming it, right? He can make them add and subtract to it. So as we move kind of from prayer and being prayed for and encouraging one another and praying for one another, we know that we're being attacked.

And that's where it comes to our second point on persecution. So point number two, persecution. Isn't it true that Satan wants to wreck our message? He really does.

He wants to wreck our message. And if he can't wreck our message, then he'll wreck our lives. And if he can do both, then he'll go for it. He really is evil and crafty.

[13 : 20] But I want to focus on one thing. And I'm not a big – I've always kind of liked history. And I kind of like science, but not really. But if we think about movement, if we think about a ball rolling – this is classic, I guess, elementary school science – but when a ball rolls, it causes friction on the ground, right?

When something is moving, something is – some opposite force is pushing against it. That's the same with wind resistance. That's why planes need turbines, right? To push against that friction. So listen to this.

Movement in life causes friction. And friction tries to slow us down. It hinders us from where we want to be. So just the same, in the Christian life, if we're doing what God has called us, if we're going, if we're making disciples, right, we know that God calls – Jesus calls us to go, then friction will come.

Right? Movement causes friction. So persecution will come. But that's not the end. Right? We know from James 1, one of my favorite books, is count it all joy, James 1, 2.

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, when you're persecuted, when you're moving in life and facing that friction and that persecution, good for you.

[14 : 41] Right? Good for you. And it may not seem that when we're in it, right? It may not seem that, but Paul recognizes this. And he recognizes persecution.

So let's read here. Verse 2. So 2 Thessalonians 3, verse 2. And that way we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not all have faith. So we know that people are trying to wreck our message.

They're trying to wreck our lives. People are trying to get after us for what we believe. That's good, because it's friction. But in persecution, Paul realizes that we can't forget the Lord.

Because, okay, we have a ton of truths in the Bible. We know our future hope. That's a big one. We know where we're going when we die. We know that when the Lord comes back or if we die, that we're going to heaven.

We also know that we have assurance of salvation, that we can't lose our salvation, John 10, 28.

Some of us even know God's will for us, but these truths should never lead to independence.

[15 : 43] Just because we know it doesn't mean that we stop relying on God, right, in this life. It's like if we're sitting idle, he talks about, he's right about to talk about idleness in 2 Thessalonians 3, 6, the end, he talks about idleness.

But if we're sitting idle and we're just waiting for the day of the Lord, knowing that, that's very comfortable. But that can't stop our reliance on the Lord. And it should never lead to independence. Now, of course, the Lord offers guidance. He offers protection. He offers safety. But this should never cause us to take for granted the Lord and what he's done for us.

And, you know, praying to him and submitting to him. It should never cause for independence. But we also must be in prayer. We must be in humble submission to him, offering up thanksgiving as well.

You know, as we go through our day, I think Paul realizes this too, that we can't just rely on the, it's good to rely on the truth of the word, but we also have to have a minute-by-minute relationship, fellowship, actually, with God.

[17 : 00] And I think that's super important. Not only, you know, a prayer that is talking to God, you know, a talking to God, you know, back and forth, of course we should do that, but a prayer with faith, knowing that God will do what we ask, believing 100% that God is in control and that he will guide us and protect us.

I think of the psalm that David wrote when he's getting attacked by his son, or from Absalom.

Yeah. And I'm just going to read this. This is Psalm chapter 3, and it reminded me of just the full faith that David had, the full assurance, and how he's not comfortable where he's at, but he's crying out to the Lord.

So I'm just going to read this. It's Psalm chapter 3, if you want to jot it down in your notes. It says, O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me.

Many are saying of my soul, there's no salvation for him in God. But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory and the lifter of my head.

[18 : 13] I cried aloud to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy hill. I lay down and I slept. I woke again, for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of my thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

Arise, O Lord. Save me, O my God. For you strike all my enemies on the cheek. You break the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Your blessing be on your people.

Selah. Notice that David, you know, emits all these foes surrounding him. God gives him rest and says, I lay down and rest, and you woke me up, and you sustained me.

And so we know that David has full faith, even when there's enemies. That's why in Psalm 23, when it says, you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies, that's what, I think, what David was focusing on there, what Paul kind of had in mind about not being comfortable when we endure persecution.

And so we know that we have movement, and we know that we'll experience friction, and to not let go of just that close relationship, we can have, you know, that access that Jesus grants us.

[19 : 27] But thirdly, we're going to look at how we are properly positioned, and we'll see that in verse 3. And let's read 2 Thessalonians 3.3.

But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And I like this, because here we see a break.

So Paul is writing to the Thessalonians, and he's addressing some issues, okay? In chapter 1, he tells them about persecution. And then in chapter 2, he's addressing the day of the Lord, because they had some confusion among them.

And then later in the section, in chapter 3, he talks about idleness in the church and not growing idle. But in the middle of this, we see a break. 3, 1 through 5.

That's what we're studying. There's a break there, right? There's an introduction, a finally. And then within that, verse 1 through 5, there's another break. Did you guys catch it?

[20 : 29] It's a short sentence. It says, But the Lord is faithful. And I think as we go, and this is just kind of a side note, but as we go through our lives, as we go through the week, it's good to take a break, and it's good to remember that God is faithful.

You know, Paul made it a point to stop what he was doing and say, You know what? The Lord is faithful. And I think it's good to remember that. To know the Lord never fails.

That he's always faithful. This is good to remember. It's good to dwell on. And then let's do this again. Let's take Paul. Let's put yourself in his shoes.

A man who is, you know, shipwrecked. A man who is beaten, mocked, stoned. Sure, he'd probably spit at. A man who is, you know, lashed.

But also a man who, and you don't really think about this much, but a man who probably had a lot of emotional distress and a lot of emotional hurt.

[21 : 29] Remember back in Timothy when you see Demas. What does he say about Demas? Demas fell in love with the present world. Right? He left me.

And he's in love with the present world. Physical wounds heal. Physical wounds heal fairly quickly for the most part.

But emotional wounds take a while. Emotional wounds take a while. When Demas left the faith, when he deserted Paul, I'm sure, that's one of the many, one of his biggest persecutions, one of his biggest struggles.

When Demas left the faith, that hurts. When someone leaves the faith, when someone gets up and walks away, even a friend, you know, when they leave you, say, I don't want to be your friend anymore, that's tough. And it can still tug on you to this day.

Right? You don't think about that much. You don't think about Paul having emotional, you know, toil. I'm sure when he was persecuting Christians, he had friends that he had to leave for the sake of Christ. Right?

[22 : 26] I'm sure he wasn't persecuting believers every minute of every day. I'm sure he'd have a social life. He would hang out. You know, he had to leave them for the sake of Christ. And then Demas left Paul for the sake of the world.

And Demas left the work that God called him to. But Paul is still able to say that the Lord is faithful. I think that's really important. That's an important reminder that no matter what we're going through, whether physical or emotional, that the Lord is faithful.

And I just love that, that little break there that the Lord is faithful. So let's look at two points inside this. Number one, we are established. You can see that right there in verse three.

He will establish you. So establish is kind of a tricky word for me because I kind of think of it as starting. It's starting something, but also being grounded in it.

It's like, I wrote down, I said firmly starting something, which kind of doesn't make sense, but we can't help but think of a verse, or I couldn't at least.

[23 : 32] Turn with me over to the book of Philippians. If you want, you don't have to turn there. It's a few. Philippians 1, verse 6, it says this, and I am sure of this.

Now think of the word establish. Keep that kind of imprinted in your mind as we look at this. Philippians 1, verse 6, and I am sure of this, that he who began a good work, hold on, he who established a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. And we also see this, this same kind of theme over in, I'm not going to turn there, but yeah, I'm not going to turn there, in Psalm chapter 1, where it's, blessed is a man who, he's like a tree who is planted by the water and who bears much fruit. And so God, God properly positions us where he wants. Right? So even though we're facing friction and it's hard, both physical and emotional, God properly places us where he wants and we're established.

a place where we can do good works. He places us in a place where we can bear much fruit. And we're there for a reason.

[25 : 00] And it can change. It is subject to change. He properly places us. Ephesians 2.10, we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for what?

Good works. So we may walk in them. So we're, where we at for, we are positioned where we're at for a purpose. And so we see that we're established in that work.

And we're recreating, we're getting friction from that. And that's okay. Because, second point, because we are guarded. Look at this. He will establish you and guard you from who?

The evil one. So there's definite contrast here from verse 2 and 3. Because we can, just keep this in the back of your mind. Verse 2 says this, and evil men, for not all have faith.

And then verse 3 goes straight into it. It says, but the Lord is faithful. And there's a definite contrast there. And he's comparing men and God. And where did these evil men from verse 2 come from?

[26 : 05] The wicked and evil men. Well, they come from the evil one. Which is then in verse 3. And we see that. So there's a definite contrast there.

But look, Paul points out the root of the wickedness, which is the evil one. And then what happens, even against Satan, the evil one, you know, the one who was in the Garden of Eden, the crafty, sneaky, the corrupt one, even against him, God says, I will guard you.

He says, I will guard you. I've been reading through the Lord of the Rings books. And it's taken me a long time. They're kind of hard to read. But I really like them. And if you've seen the movies, the first movie, The Fellowship, there's a spot in there where they're all sitting around deciding what they're going to do.

And the smallest guy, Frodo, he takes the ring and says, I'll take it to Mordor. And then there's a part where Aragorn, who's a king, he says this.

He says, if my life or death, I can protect you, I will. You have my sword. And then the archer, the elf, stands up. He says, you have my bow. And then Gimli, the small dwarf, he says, he says, and my axe.

[27 : 16] And they're like, we will protect you. And if you read, continue reading through the book or watching the movie, you'll notice that sometimes Aragorn is carrying Frodo on his back, carrying him through snow, through hard times.

You'll see at one point in a cave that they say, get behind us because we're about to face these enemies, these orcs, they're coming, get behind us.

And they do everything they can to provide for Frodo, this guy who's carrying a big emotional and physical baggage. And they're guarding him with everything they have and they're taking into account his needs too.

They're saying, hey, when do you want to stop? I think you're getting tired. Let's stop. Let's eat something. And then they'll say, hey, where do you want to go? Do you want to take this path or this path? And they're also offering counsel.

And I just thought it's such a good illustration of our Lord Jesus guarding us. You know, he says, you know, you need to stop.

[28 : 20] You need to eat something. You know, you need spiritual rest. You know, I'll protect you. Get behind me. We just looked.

Psalm chapter 3, a shield about you. You know, I will protect you amidst all these people. I'm there for you. Back in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 31.6, be strong and courageous.

Don't fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you and He will not forsake you. He'll guard you. 1 Corinthians 10.13, and God is faithful.

He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He provides a way out so that you can stand up under it so that you can defeat that temptation, right? Because we know that Lord Jesus was tempted in the desert and that it's not a sin, but God says that I will protect you and that temptation doesn't have to seize you because I am faithful.

And we see that a lot here. And then lastly, if the musicians want to come up, we're going to look at one more thing and that is practice and practicing love.

[29 : 35] So look at verse 5. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. Faithfulness and love go hand in hand.

You see that all the time in the Bible. You know, we say, why won't the Lord fail us? Why is the Lord faithful? Well, it's because the Lord loves us. Right? That's why He's faithful.

That's why He doesn't leave us. So let's dwell on that. We need to have proper motivation too. And we were talking about movement earlier.

We were talking about the friction we receive when we're moving, when we're walking in the way that God has called us. But we have to have, in a different note, we have to have a love for our calling, for what we're called for.

For example, I do not like gardening. Yeah, I don't like gardening. I remember one time a friend came over, me and Luke's friend.

[30 : 38] His name was Micah. And we walked in the doors. It was after graduation maybe or something. I don't know. And Dad was like, oh yeah, so I need you to go weed the garden. And I was like, okay. And so we're out there.

It's so hot. It's like middle of summer, whatever. And we're like, you know, doing whatever. Or raking. I don't know what to do. And it's so, I don't know. Gardening for me is like, wow. Like I've spent all this time and like all these flowers are dead now.

And like we got like one zucchini. I don't know. It doesn't seem very profitable. But some people have a real love for it. I mean, I've seen the Broadwell's backyard and it looks insane. Deanna, yeah.

And, but on the other hand, you know, I love to play sports and basketball. I'll spend an hour and a half outside shooting hoops in the summer heat because I love doing that.

Because, you know, I don't love gardening, but I love playing basketball and I'll be driven towards it because that's what I like to do. Because I love it. And so I think on the flip side is that we need love for our mission, for our calling.

[31 : 38] If we don't like it, we need to learn, we need to learn to like it because it's what God has called us to. And it's just going to be stagnant. And we're just going to be hitting a wall over and over if we don't love it.

just as you love, you know, your favorite hobby or you spend time and put work into what you like. It's the same thing. And there's no greater example of love than the steadfastness of Christ.

Right? And we talked about this this morning. It was a great remembrance meeting. But I can't help but think of one verse here as we're just closing up. Isaiah 53, verse 3 through 6.

A classic verse, but I think it's so applicable to this where 2 Thessalonians says, May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and steadfastness of Christ. Isaiah 53, verse 3 says this, He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.

[32 : 49] He was pierced for our transgression and he was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed. And you see here that just the contrast of verse 3 is like he is being despised and he is being rejected by all these people, yet he fulfilled his goal.

Right? Because he was doing all these things and everyone was like, what are you doing? And then he was pierced for our transgressions. And you can see the steadfastness of Christ in that verse. And just if you read through the Gospels in Jesus' life, you see the steadfastness of Christ. And Jesus, despite the constant backlash, was steadfast to his calling. And he showed a love for his calling and we should do the same. You know, you saw him healing. You saw him feeding. You saw him healing. He says, your faith has made you well. I have water that always satisfies. And so, for you guys, if you don't take anything from this, if you don't take anything at all, just take the

example of Christ and his steadfastness and how he showed a life of love towards the people around him in that day.

But even now, we can take example from that. And so, remember, from these couple verses, remember that we need to be praying for each other, praying for others and knowing that if we're being called by God, let's go forth and do that calling in love and grow in love or have a love for it and be committed to it and know that we are going to be persecuted and have friction for it.

[34 : 29] And there's going to be hard times, you know, physically and emotionally and know that God established that in you, that he properly positioned you. And lastly, let's practice it and go forth.

So let me end in a word of prayer. Lord, thank you so much for just this opportunity to dive into 2 Thessalonians and Lord, just see what you have for us and I thank you so much for your love and for your son who died on the cross.

May we take his example this week and just go forth in power and in love. It's your name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.