

Sickness, persecution, and other trials are opportunity to pray for ourselves and for others. God does not always grant peace, or healing, or peace. How should we pray? Paul's prayer for the persecuted Thessalonian believers helps us understand how to respond and gives us a pattern both for our prayer and for our lives.

I. A Proper Response to their Situation: Prayer

1. As Paul, Silas, and Timothy prayed, they had in mind the Thessalonian believers' perseverance in persecution which was evidence of divine judgment culminating in the glorification of Christ and the believer.
2. They not only gave thanks and boasted of them, they prayed for them constantly
 - There is a continued necessity for prayer, even when there is spiritual maturity. Cf. Ephesians 6:18.
 - Prayer is irreplaceable. Whatever else is done, prayer should not be neglected. Cf. Philippians 4:6.

II. A Proper Desire for Prayer: Sanctification

1. The result Paul desires was lives worthy of God's calling, that is, sanctified lives.
 - a. God's calling to believers is to belong to Jesus and fellowship with Him, to be saints and holy, to be His children, to be free from the bondage of sin, and to have an eternal hope (Romans 1:6, 7; 8:30; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 9; Ephesians 1:18; 4:4). The Thessalonians had been reminded that they were called into God's kingdom and glory and encouraged to walk worthy of that (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12).
 - b. Paul continued to pray to that end to which he had worked during his time with them, that God would evaluate their lives and declare that their lives measured up to being called holy, children of God, and destined for glory. Cf. Ephesians 4:1.
2. The manner in which this would be accomplished was God fulfilling "their every resolve for goodness and every work of faith by his power."
 - a. The believers had both the right inward desire and the resulting outward action. They willingly resolved to do good, as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). Theirs was a living faith which produced action. Cf. James 2:17.
 - b. But it is by His power that God fulfills every resolve for good and every work of faith. This is the manner in which the believer will be able to walk worthy and the reason why the believer will be counted worthy of the calling.
 - c. Two difficult concepts did not hinder Paul from praying: neither the tension between God's action and human responsibility (cf. Philippians 2:12–13), nor the tension between God's determined plan (2 Thess 1:5 –they would be counted worthy) and praying toward that end.
 - Rather than struggling with these concepts, follow Paul's pattern and pray for spiritual maturity as a primary priority, even as we rightly pray for such things as peaceful and quiet lives (1 Timothy 2:2).
 - Spiritual well-being is more important than physical well-being, and eternal reward is more important than temporal benefits.

III. A Proper Motivation for their Sanctification: Glorification of Jesus and the believer

1. Paul prayed as he did, so that the person of Jesus, all His qualities, would be exalted, especially when He returns.
2. The glorification of Jesus will be in the believer and the believer will be glorified in Christ.
 - a. Christ will receive glory in the believer, because believers are a demonstration of the work which He has done on the cross.
 - b. Believers will be glorified in Christ, because of their union with Him (cf. Colossians 3:4; Philippians 3:21). Even now there is a foretaste of that glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). It is not because of any inherent merit but solely by the grace of God.
 - Glory to Jesus should be a motivating factor in how we pray. Keeping His glory in mind may change even what we pray.

Even as we pray for peace and rest and health, pray most for the lives believers to measure up to their calling. Pray that the fruit of the Spirit would be evident even in the midst of trials. Remember that God's grace is always more than sufficient. He gets the glory.