

THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER

Tuesday, October 21

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

1 Thessalonians 3:9 *How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?*

Paul's response to the good report from Timothy was to break out in praise to God. Instead of congratulating the Thessalonians for doing a "good job" or personally taking credit for their faith, Paul turns to the One who had enabled them to stand – God Himself. It would be impossible for Paul to express all the thanks that was owed to God for the joy the Thessalonians brought to his life. His earnest prayer was that he might see them again and help them to continue to grow in their faith. The natural result of Paul's concern was to fall on his knees in prayer. Since Paul could not be physically present with these dear believers he brings them to the throne of grace.

Prayer for a REUNION (3:11) – Paul again expresses his desire to be with the Thessalonians. He does so, not by saying he plans to visit, but by asking God to direct his path back to the saints he loved. This emphasizes Paul's belief that God is in control of all things. Though Satan may hinder his efforts (2:18), God could overrule.

Prayer for a REVIVAL (3:12) – Though Paul had already recognized and commended their faith, he knew that the process of spiritual growth never ends. There is a need for constant revival. Paul requests that the Lord continue to increase their love for one another. Both "increase" and "overflow" have the idea of going beyond the normal; of having more than enough. A Christian should have a love that overflows to others. Paul sets himself and his fellow workers as the example. The apostle has already expressed his love for the Thessalonian believers, but a Christian's love should go beyond this. It also includes a love for non-believers ("for everyone else"), including those who are persecuting them.

Prayer for a REJOICING (3:13) – The ultimate outcome of Christian growth is being blameless before God. Paul's focus on "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" reminds believers that the goal of ultimate holiness will finally be achieved when Christ returns and finishes the work He began at the moment of salvation. To be "blameless" does not mean perfection but that a person deals with their sin and receives forgiveness. It means that there should be no reasonable charge that can be leveled against them. The word translated "holy" is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament for God alone. It is used of people in the New Testament only here and in 2 Corinthians 7:1. It is an expression of the ultimate character of God. As His children, believers belong to God and are to exhibit His holy character. This occurs when believers commit themselves to the Holy Spirit's leading and live their lives in complete obedience to His will. At Christ's return, Paul could rejoice because they would be with Him and were found blameless before men and holy before God (2:19-20).

When we can do nothing else, we can pray. Believers should be in constant prayer for one another. These prayers should not only reflect a concern for physical wellbeing, but for their spiritual health as well. While praying for physical needs is important, praying for spiritual needs is much more important because these are the things that remain for eternity.