

Prayer

Part 5

Speaker	Frank Wallace
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[00:00:01] The fifth address on prayer given by Frank Wallis at Basselkrell Manor in October 1986.

First Thessalonians chapter 1 and we'll read from verse 1. Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our [00:01:03] Father. Now chapter 3 and verse 9. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God, night and day, praying exceedingly that we might see your face and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith. Now God himself and our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way unto you and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men even as we do toward you. To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our Father at the coming of our [00:02:02] Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. And I missed one in chapter 2. Chapter 2 and verse 13.

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing because when you receive the word of God which he heard of us you received it not as the word of men but as it is in truth the work the word of God which effectually worketh also in you that believe. For ye brethren became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus. For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen even as they have of the Jews. Now lastly in chapter 5. Verse 17. Chapter 5 verse [00:03:10] 17 pray without ceasing in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Verse 23 and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you who also will do it. Brethren pray for us. We have said in these meetings we've had together about prayer that prayer honors God and these quotations that we [00:04:06] have read from the first epistle to the Thessalonians confirm this because Paul speaks about giving thanks to God that is all the things that he saw in the assembly at Thessalonica things that were worthwhile things that were pleasing to God they all had come from God he was the one who had arranged them planned them the one who had given them to the Thessalonians and for that reason Paul says we ought to give thanks and this is the burden that's on my heart tonight that we might understand this a little more and respond a little better in this matter of thanksgiving. Tremendous thing don't let's think that thanksgiving is a simple thing maybe a simple [00:05:02] thing to do but it has profound connections we mentioned this already but it's worth mentioning again that when the ten lepers were cleansed only one returned and the Lord Jesus commented on this when he said only one has returned to give thanks but he didn't stop there he said this one who has returned to give thanks has

glorified God so he is a very profound thing and what might seem to be a very simple matter that when we give thanks we glorify God if you like we honor God we give him the praise the honor the glory that rightly belongs to him for blessings received and enjoyed I think you will agree with me that that's something that's well worthwhile in the affairs men natural affairs simple affairs if we receive a gift or a kindness [00:06:05] it's proper right to simply say thanks a bad thing if we're marked by this difficulty in saying thanks this hardness of heart or unresponsiveness bad enough in relation to each other much worse when it's in relation to God the gifts that we receive from each other they pass away the gifts that we receive from God they're eternal oh how wonderful it is that people such as ourselves poor souls saved by the grace of God and his wondrous mercy are able to give thanks to this great and glorious God so briefly we'll run down these verses that Paul wrote to the Thessalonians background first of all that Paul preaching and Thessalonica preaching the gospel that he knew [00:07:03] so well and all was presented the death and resurrection of Christ resulted in a company of believers being formed together the assembly of Thessalonians in God the Father not long converted not long brought to the Lord Jesus but the Apostle wrote to them because he was deeply concerned about what they were passing through persecution arose soon afterwards after they were converted and the Apostle was concerned that this persecution might not upset them and turn them away from their faith so as a godly father a spiritual father a feeling father he wrote to them to encourage them to stand fast and notice he doesn't tell them what a poor lot they are that they should be stronger oh no he had a great deal to commend when he wrote to them [00:08:02] and again and again and again as we've read together we see him thanking God for the positive features that existed in those believers at Thessalonica and we might say at the beginning here is a good attitude of heart for those of us who are older to appreciate what God is doing and those who are younger they have a great deal to learn as we have still a great deal to learn but if we've been on the road a few years we've gained a little experience with the Lord and that experience should be made available for those who are younger and the best way we can encourage them is to take account of the positive features of grace in them and seek to promote more and enlargement and I find this is a beautiful picture of the largeness of heart of the Apostle his unenvious attitude towards those believers he's deeply concerned for their progress and their [00:09:03] blessing and he encourages them and he makes much of what had been formed in them good thing for us so easy to be envious jealous unresponsive unappreciative but these are the features that belong to the flesh the Apostle Paul had a heart like the Lord he made the most of things the best of things and sought to encourage it and enlarge it so he begins verse 2 as we read together we thanks to God always for you all now there's a tremendous amount in that expression we give thanks well that's the first thing giving thanks I suppose the Apostle was deeply thankful to God that his service in the gospel had met with success souls were converted they were brought together gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus that indeed was something to give thanks for [00:10:05] and he gave God the glory in that he thanked God for what had happened he didn't count heads and say well I'm the great successful preacher this is what has happened through my preaching we give God the thanks and he says notice we give thanks to God always for those of you who like to study in the Bible and search them out just see how often Paul uses this word always there's nothing spasmodic about the Christian life of Paul he's not up one day and down the next he's in a pretty level keel and we find he uses this word quite often always just let me quote to always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal bodies then in first Philippians chapter 1 as always he says that Christ may be [00:11:08] magnified in my body that is at every day of Paul's life there was something for the Lord Jesus Christ now here he is saying we always remember you Thessalonians we never forget you what a tremendous thing for anyone to say those who are engaged in some measure in the Lord's service whatever form that services they are profoundly thankful when people say we always remember you in our prayers at home that's a tremendous encouragement tremendous doesn't

matter what form the services but to know that people are praying for you is a tremendous encouragement and I think this is what Paul is doing he's saying you Thessalonians we never forget you we always remember you now that's a challenge to my heart I'm sure it is to yours do we always remember our local brethren and heartfelt concern and prayer or other believers [00:12:10] always well that's a challenge as we said last night our prime responsibility is where the Lord has placed us and that should be near to our heart and to pray continually for the spiritual blessing of all concerned Paul says we never forget you what a tremendous thing we give thanks unto God always he goes on to say making mention of you in our prayers now this is what he remembered remembering remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father this came within the scope of Paul's [00:13:01] giving of thanks he took account of this young company and their zeal their desire to spread abroad the word of the gospel their constancy of hope in relation to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the labor that they expended in for the Lord's glory and for his name and this came within his prayer remembering before God these things that they were doing and no doubt praying that they might be maintained in this I'm sure as we view young believers we notice their zeal and energy and their desire to serve the Lord in some particular way well pray for them earnestly pray for them easy to criticize them easy to find fault with things that they do and say they're young they're immature they have a lot to learn but wherever there is zeal and energy and faith and hope encourage it pray for it and ask that they might be consolidated [00:14:08] in the things that are worthwhile things that are true and precious I believe Paul would have a long look and say well now the time will come when I'm gone and all the other apostles they will have gone and others will have gone and these young believers they have to stand firm alone in Thessalonica they need all the hope all the help and all the encouragement that they can receive oh dear brethren don't let's be unstinted in our encouragement let us encourage wherever we can everything that is done for the name of Christ in whatever form let's encourage it by prayer and by practical encouragement just a little quiet word by the way I think this was the attitude of heart that the Apostle had it was the attitude of heart that the Lord Jesus had a bruised reed he didn't [00:15:05] break smoking flax he didn't quench he was always ready to encourage whatever he found was pleasing to his God I find this in the prayer of the beloved Apostle remembering without ceasing praying always deeply concerned for the blessing of that company now we move over to chapter 2 now there's a reason for the Thanksgiving in verse 13 of chapter 2 for this cause also thank we God without ceasing because when you receive the Word of God which he heard of us you received it not as the word of men but as it is in truth the Word of God which he factually worketh also in you that believe here was another reason for Paul to pray to God with the Thanksgiving those people [00:16:09] in Thessalonica had received the Word of God they received it as the Word of God they didn't receive it as if it came from man they didn't receive it because the Apostle Paul said it they accepted it as the Word of God and Paul thanked God for this it was another reason for him to bend his knees before God and thank him that this Word of God had been received and not only had been received but was working effectually in the lives of those dear Christians here is something to be deeply thankful for we're reminded in the parable of the sower that there are four conditions of hearing the Word of God can become effective in a good and [00:17:01] honest heart but there are three other conditions where the word has no effect or a temporary effect or a passing effect but only one condition that has a lasting fruitful effect and I believe this is what Paul was praying about that this was the fourth occasion that we find in the parable good and honest hearts that the word was heard and the word was effectually working in them I don't know how you feel but after you've been on the road a few years and you think of the number of meetings that you have attended the number of addresses you've heard the number of bible readings you've attended the number of times you've read your bible yourself oh my what wonderful people we should be but are we it's one thing to hear the word it's another thing to read the word has the word become effective in

us that's the whole [00:18:02] point of all ministry and all bible readings and all reading of the word personally that the word might not only be known but effective and as the as Paul looked at those Thessalonians he rejoiced he gave thanks that that word was effective how effective had it become he goes on to say for ye brethren became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen even as they have of the Jews here I think the thrust of what Paul is saying is connected with persecution trial opposition that what they were suffering suffering in Thessalonica had also been true of other assemblies I think there is wisdom in Paul presenting this [00:19:01] because they might have said we're believers in Jesus we've accepted him as Lord why should we be suffering and Paul is saying dear brethren you're not the only ones who have suffered other assemblies have suffered other companies of believers have suffered these assemblies in Judea they suffered from the hands of the Jews you Thessalonians you're suffering from your own people and you're really following in the same footsteps as other assemblies and that was true but I would like to present it in another way in an application that gathering to the name of the Lord Jesus they didn't adopt a local particular kind of gathering different from the ones in Judea we are in Thessalonica we are not Jews we are Gentiles we'll have our own way of gathering to the name of the Lord Jesus [00:20:03] we'll have a different kind of discipline or a different form of function no says Paul you became imitators of the other assemblies and this I believe is a great guard against what against what we often call independency that no company of believers can say well this is our little corner we'll do as we like doesn't matter what other people do that's not Christianity that's not the truth of the one body the truth of the body means that if we gather to the name of the Lord Jesus we're governed by the same Lord we're governed by the same head we're all bound together in one bundle of life and we seek to do the same things not in a way like robots not that idea at all but governed by the same truth often be said variety and unity wonderful thing here were those believers in Thessalonica they met simply to [00:21:03] the name of the Lord Jesus knowing no other power but the power of the spirit no other head but Christ in glory and no other authority but the word of God whatever they had in their hands and I believe this is involved in what Paul is saying you became imitators of the other assemblies good thing that this was seen more and more in the Christian testimony today instead of the multiple divisions that really is a disgrace to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ make no mistake about that absolute disgrace that there should be so much weakness and division amongst the saints of God one Lord gives one form of truth that truth is binding upon all Christians wherever they are found and an answer to it would give a more united testimony and my what thanksgiving there would be to God if that were accomplished but Paul thanked them that there was this evidence [00:22:03] in their lives that the word of God was not only heard not only read but it was effectively operating in them that is simply they were obedient to what they heard now we move over to chapter 3 verse 9 for what thanks can we render to God again for you for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God now one feels the heart of the apostle expanding as he sees the progress that this young company is making and the solid features of truth that were being expressed in them and he was joying absolutely in rejoicing before God as he saw those features in the [00:23:02] Thessalonian company he rejoiced now that's something to thank God for if we see Christians making progress successful in the gospel successful in truth being bound together in love all these features and many others being seen in believers thank God thank God he's the author of these things thank God that the spirit has produced this oh sectarianism is a terrible thing where because it might be in a company of believers that we are not particularly walking with then we might withhold our thanksgiving when we see positive features in them that are pleasing to God what an awful spirit no wherever we see things that are pleasing to God and believers we rejoice thank God praise God that the Lord's name is being honored that God is being worshiped oh how thankful we are for any feature at all that is the proof of the Holy Spirit's service [00:24:01] in his people and that's what Paul did he he rejoiced for what he saw

in their sakes now listen night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith think of that night and day night and day night and day these Thessalonians were in the mind of the apostle in his prayers i remember rightly in acts 20 Paul speaks about for a space of three years he warned the Christians about conditions that were rapidly approaching three years he says he warned them if you read the epistles of Paul to the different churches you'll find this attitude of prayer and thanksgiving is often mentioned by him just rapidly i looked down the concordance that i have and i counted [00:25:05] at least 20 there might be many more but it shows the depth of feeling and interest that the apostle had in believers that he could take account of them in this way thanking God rejoicing before God night and day remembering them what a tremendous man he was worn out perhaps with his exertions worn out with his traveling and with the cares of all the assemblies that were upon him daily here was one of the burdens that rested upon his heart praying for the believers using his time to pray for the spiritual prosperity and protection of those who knew the Lord Jesus Christ then he says and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith the keen eye of the apostle would detect things that they required [00:26:05] he wasn't speaking in an arrogant way or a presumptuous way after all he was endowed by the Lord as the apostle to the Gentiles to teach them and help them and lead them in the things of the Lord so when his eye detected that there were things lacking his earnest desire was to go and be with them and help them in that particular matter what a happy thing this is communication maintained face to face help not a long distance effort the apostle says I want to be with you I want to see you face to face I want to try and help you it's my desire indeed he might often say it's my responsibility as the apostle to the Gentiles to help you here again the great feeling of the heart of the apostle comes out thanks God for what he sees continues to ask God for help and [00:27:04] direction that he might be a help to those who need it have we this kind of feeling or do we stand aloof oh what a terrible thing it is to stand aloof when help is required that's the attitude of the priest and the Levite as we find in the story of the good Samaritan don't want to get involved ah but we should be on our knees and look for wisdom and help and guidance so that we might be a help to those who require it spiritually he goes on to say now God himself and this is in the nature of a prayer now God himself and our father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way unto you here is Paul praying praying that God and the Lord Jesus Christ unitedly may direct the paths of the apostle to Thessalonica here of course he's recognizing [00:28:02] God's sovereignty over him and the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ he doesn't presume to say I'll come tomorrow or the next day I want to have direction to come at the right moment at the right time with the right help a very very important thing for those who seek to help in the things of the Lord and he says the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men even as we do toward you well isn't that beautiful the apostle is saying brethren love one another and don't stop there love those who are unconverted and take your cue from us look what we have done for you you remember he said in an early chapter you know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes how holily and justly and boldly and justly and for you you remember he said in an early chapter you know what manner of men we were among you for [00:29:07] your sakes how holily and justly and blamelessly we lived for your sake that was the way we lived and they were persecuted because they brought the gospel to the Thessalonians Paul says look at the love we showed towards you we want you to show that love to each other and we want that love to abound even to the unconverted very powerful thing love isn't it tremendous thing love we know that in our own selves God has loved us Christ has loved us and because of that we are kept in the pathway as Christians what a tremendous thing love is amongst the saints we've heard of people who need great deal of help dear sister Grace Taylor dear brother Basil Wolf our hearts go out to them immediately if one member suffers we all suffer if one member rejoices we all rejoice this is the love that circulates in the body of Christ [00:30:06] the love that should be more and more abounding in the body of Christ and this is in Paul's prayer I want this to happen

want this to be among you I've repeated this a few times I'm going to repeat it again and I believe it with all my heart although some might disagree with me that in our meetings and generally speaking in companies of believers the difficulty is not bad doctrine and the difficulty is not gross immorality the greatest difficulty is getting on with each other and I think most company of Christians and I think most company of Christians would confess that that is true and where love is operating where there is love for each other then all the other functions in the assembly are made much more easy oh dear brethren what a wonderful thing it is love oiling the machine you like if you like oiling the cog wheels that they may that they [00:31:04] might run smoothly and effectively love towards each other and the apostle he uses that word love to one another just as the Lord did a new commandment I give to you that you love one another and that cuts out any partiality the tremendous thing then this is that Paul is that Paul is desiring and then he says to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints now this is not the coming for his saints it's the coming with his saints what we commonly refer to as the appearing now the apostle is indicating hang on keep going on don't give up be marked by this holiness let the work of God have its place in your lives hold on and be marked [00:32:06] by holiness because this is the kind of thing that receives a reward at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ publicly all that's done for him in his name all the avoidance of evil and corruption and wickedness all that's preserved that's precious and holy in connection with his name will receive its adequate reward when he comes publicly and his saints will be with him oh dear friends what a tremendous thing that is Paul is showing them there's a great end in view that the suffering is a temporary thing however severe severe it might be it will pass but there's a wonderful day coming when those who suffer with him now will reign and they'll come out with him in public display and they'll have a part with him in that glorious kingdom that he will set up for the glory of God and the blessing of all concerned now we move on to chapter [00:33:08] five first of all we'll go down to verse 23 where Paul has another prayer where he says the very God of peace sanctify you holy and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ here again the apostle is crying to God that the God of peace the God of illimitable power might bless these Thessalonians in their whole being it's often been said that man is a tripartite being body soul and spirit and Paul is saying I want that I want you to be preserved blameless no evil thing connected with you in view of the [00:34:04] coming of our Lord Jesus Christ here we believe he's referring to the rapture his coming for the church to take the church out of this scene to be with him forever a private matter something that the world will never see something is between the Lord and his own the appearing we believe is a public matter every eye shall see him all nations of the earth shall wail because of him though dear friends this is a coming that Paul desires that the saints should be in keeping with that as they are found waiting watching there might be a moral conformity to that great and wonderful expectation and he prays to the God of peace to set them apart wholly in view of that great event we've been taught and rightly so that whenever you find the expression God of peace it suggests a God of strength God of ability and power one verse can prove that you remember at [00:35:06] the end of the epistle to the Hebrews the God of peace who raised out from amongst the dead our Lord Jesus Christ and that in the scriptures is the greatest expression of God's power Ephesians 1 the surpassing greatness of his power to us what who believe when he raised Christ out from amongst the dead wonderful thing you see God is able to do this and what the apostle is crying for is that the saints might be amenable to that teaching and power that they might be subject to it that they might be formed by in view of that tremendous moment that was about to come now Paul has two exhortations three exhortations to the Thessalonians he's been telling them that he prayed for them along with others there was fellowship in prayer in relation to the Thessalonians [00:36:05] now he says you pray without ceasing this is what we have done for you you do this he's not particularly praying for himself in that first exhortation he's saying you as a Christian company pray without ceasing I suppose we might be amazed if we knew

the amount of prayer that arises from any Christian company there is the prayer meeting which is the collective expression of prayer would that it were better attended and supported and there is the household prayer and there is individual prayer and if we're all collected together and presented to us we might be amazed at the amount of prayer that goes up week by week to God but having said that as we take account of ourselves personally we would be bound to say yes thank God for that but it could be increased [00:37:04] and this is what Paul is saying pray without ceasing then he says in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you very often in Bible readings when we're talking about the will of God there's very often the question how can we ascertain the will of God for us well this is a very solemn question and a challenging question but it may be the question of changing our locality changing our employment marriage and things of that nature yes may be very difficult to ascertain the will of God and in other realms too but there are scriptures which are extremely specific and this is one of them that we can say very definitely that this is the will of God and Paul says in everything give thanks for this is the will of [00:38:02] God in Christ Jesus concerning you now it's easy to say that now these believers were suffering a great deal of persecution very very difficult thing when you're passing through suffering of an extreme kind to say thanks Lord and yet this is what Paul is saying so easy when things are going our way and everything's fine ah yes give thanks he's good to us but then to thank him too for his discipline and his ways with us he knows infinitely better than we do what is best for us and the things that we might think are contrary might be the very things that are best for us but in any way doesn't matter what it is any circumstance any trial any joy in everything give thanks for this is the will of God he wants us to give thanks for all that we pass through [00:39:03] for all that we enjoy for the liberal kindness that he shows towards us and the provision he makes for us day by day so brethren if at the end of a day we go to our beds and we never thank God for things we've received we've failed in relation to the will of God that's what that verse tells us in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you then the apostle says brethren pray for us now this is the language of a man who's not high and mighty and proud and self-sufficient here is a man who realizes the value of prayer after all this was how he began his Christian life after he got converted he got down on his knees and the disciple was sent to him or rather before the disciple was sent to him the Lord said to Ananias behold he prayeth and at the very outset of his life he realized the value [00:40:07] of prayer now he's an active service for the Lord every day he's traveling he's preaching he's praying he's helping he's exerting his teaching not a moment is wasted all his life is now for the Lord for his master and he realizes what he requires he realizes his need he says brethren pray for us now this is an appeal coming from the heart it's not an aside it's a very definite exhortation from the heart of the apostle I value your prayers also I believe there's the indication of fellowship Paul and his companions were praying for them he desired the Thessalonians to pray for Paul and himself fellowship a reciprocal attitude in relation to prayer not one way working both ways and oh how much the Thessalonians benefited from the prayers of Paul [00:41:06] and his companions how much the servants of the Lord have benefited from the prayers of the saints valuable contribution to the service of God valuable contribution for those who serve the Lord in any capacity whatsoever brethren pray for us so if Paul mentions the different prayers and the different attitudes that he had towards the Thessalonians in his prayers as mentioned in the Thessalonian epistle he's also large enough of heart to solicit their prayers for his service and what he did for the Lord and so brethren as we close whatever else we forget if we can remember that thanksgiving glorifies God if thanksgiving honors God that thanksgiving is binding upon us as the will of God then our meeting tonight will not have been in vain thanksgiving for blessings [00:42:05] received temporal and spiritual the eternal every kind of blessing that we have received merits thanksgiving to God let us see to it humbly that we are what shall I say abundant in our thanksgiving oh give thanks unto God for he is good says the psalmist and as you look down the psalmist prayers and and songs this word comes through again and again and again and again thanksgiving I know

that we sometimes put things in watertight compartments and we say well we give thanks for what we receive we praise God for what he's given us for what he's done for us and we worship him for who he is well that's very nice we don't complain about that at all [00:43:01] but when we turn to the bible it says and they bowed their heads and they worshiped and they said oh God we thank thee well now if I understand that statement correct thanksgiving is a form of worship it glorifies God it honors God oh then may we all be encouraged to give him thanks more and more now can we say number 60 our thanks to God most high the father of our lord the savior God is he and be his name adored oh God thy mercy shall endure thy word abide forever sure give thanks aloud to God to God your praises bring to God upon his throne his works and glory sing his power and grace are [00:44:01] still the same let endless praise exalt his name number 60