

Thoughts from Second Thessalonians ...

Paul's Written Prayer



The Second Coming
of Christ

Prayers can be spoken — verbally out loud or in the heart — or they can be written. In the case of the apostle Paul and many others who wrote sections of God's holy word, the prayers just flowed as they were writing because prayer was so much interwoven into the fabrics of their lives. The Holy Spirit, laying the foundation for the church and ensuring the inclusion of all the instruction necessary — necessary for the individual Christian and the church as a whole — preserved these prayers as examples and models for the brethren who would come following the deaths of the apostles. Hence Paul's written prayer on behalf of the Thessalonians is worthy of some parsing and examination.

▼ **Who is addressed** — Those of early Trinitarian bent generally held to the idea that prayers could only be addressed to the Father. That is one reason to examine the Holy Spirit inspired prayers of the new covenant writings, to see if that proposition holds true. "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father," is how Paul begins his free-flowing prayer (2 Thessalonians 2:16). The first personage addressed is Jesus, and the second is the Father. Clearly prayers can be addressed to Jesus, and clearly prayers can be jointly addressed.

▼ **Proper praise** — Certainly Jesus is worthy of praise and adulation, as well as the Father. In this case Paul's praise is directly attached to the Father, "who has," he asserts, "loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace." As is often the case with the direct words of Jesus or the teachings in the epistles, information occupying small space is worthy of major pondering. These words are an example: *God has loved us*. For the great and awesome God, whom the heavens cannot contain, to notice us would be of major import all by itself, but for Him actually to love us is even more significant. Not only that, *He has given us eternal comfort*. How quickly those words roll off the tongue of the Christian! This is a theme that constantly surfaces in the sacred writings, but the saint may forget to ponder what it means to have this eternal comfort as contrasted to eternal punishment. In addition, Paul comments that *He has given us good hope by grace*. Those of the world are without real hope; they often have false hopes, or are hopeless. What a blessing it is for the faithful child of God to have real hope in his own resurrection, and this through the gift (or grace) of God! Certainly the disciple of Christ should constantly contemplate the eternal blessings he possesses, and continually fall on his face and praise Him who sits on the glorious throne.

▼ **The petition** — Having properly praised the Son and the Father, and having commented on what the Father had done for the brethren, the apostle then brings in his petition. He appeals to both the Son and the Father to "comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word" (2 Thessalonians 2:17). *Comfort* is derived from the same concept as the *Paraclete*, the Helper. The picture is that Paul is petitioning the Father to *come alongside* to comfort, to encourage, to intercede for, and to help the brethren. Furthermore, the pleading includes the strengthening of the hearts of the saints, to help them be additionally encouraged, to persevere happily through challenges and difficulties and sufferings.

Overpowering supernatural opposition requires supernatural strength. Hence Paul was willing to pray to the appropriate Personages, to offer the appropriate praise to the same, and then to offer his petitions for the future of the church. What a great picture it is of the loving heavenly Father individually coming alongside, putting His arm around the shoulder of each saint, and providing the appropriate encouragement and strength. This is truly exactly what each child of God needs in order to fight his own victorious battle for the faith and to finish his course, to engage in every good work and word. May modern brethren place the proper weight on these words and petitions, and likewise be strengthened to charge enthusiastically into the fray!

FACING SUPER-
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