

May 3, 2020 ~ 1Thessalonians 3:11-13, Paul Prays for the Thessalonians
Please turn to **1Thessalonians 3:11-13** and read through the passage.

Last week, in **1Thessalonians 3:1-10**, we read again of Paul's love for the believers in Thessalonica, how he was concerned for them and really wanted to be with them, while at the same time Paul expressed his great joy to Timothy's report, after returning from Thessalonica.

Read **1Thessalonians 3:10**... Paul says, "*we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face.*" Paul has the heart of a pastor who is longing to see his brothers and sisters in Christ. If you remember, Paul, Silas and Timothy had originally spent just a few weeks with the Tesselonians, proclaiming the gospel of Christ, many believed in and received Christ, Jew and Gentile (see **Acts 17:1-4**).

Back to **1Thessalonians 3:11**... Paul is praying here for God's protection and provision so that he might return to Thessalonica to see the believers there, "*Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you.*"

Paul is writing to the church in Thessalonica, and yet in this portion of his letter he prays to God the Father and God the Son, with an emphasis on the unity that exists and has always existed between the Father and the Son; for they are equally sovereign and they always completely agree on everything.

And let us not forget that God the Holy Spirit is also in perfect harmony with the Father and the Son (**Romans 8:27**), "*He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He [the Holy Spirit] intercedes for the saints [genuine believers and followers of Christ] according to the will of God.*"

The Holy Spirit knows God's will, and He is the One who actively intercedes for us, so that God's will may be fulfilled in and through our lives.

The members of the Triune Godhead [a Tri-unity or Trinity], i.e., the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are equally One, and yet they are three distinct persons.

This concept is difficult, if not impossible for the natural mind to conceive, but God's Word is clear that there is only One Living and True God (cf. *Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1Corinthians 8:4; 2Corinthians 13:14*).

The Doctrine of the Trinity is proved by Scripture (cf. *Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; Ephesians 4:4-6; 1Peter 1:2; Jude 1:20-21*).

Divine Titles are applied to all three persons of the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (cf. *Exodus 20:2; John 20:28; Acts 5:3-4*).

Each Person of the Trinity is described in God's Word, as being:
Eternal (c f. *Romans 16:26; Revelation 22:13; Hebrews 9:14*).

Holy (cf. *Revelation 4:8; 15:4; Acts 3:14; 1John 2:20*).

Omnipresent (cf. *Jeremiah 23:24; Ephesians 1:23; Psalm 139:7*).

Omnipotent (cf. *Genesis 17:1; Revelation 1:8; Jeremiah 32:17; Hebrews 1:3*).

Omniscient (cf. *Acts 15:18; John 21:17; 1Corinthians 2:10-11*).

Creator (cf. *Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:16; Job 33:4; Psalms 148:5; John 1:3*)

Sanctifier (cf. *Jude 1:1; Hebrews 2:11; 1Peter 1:2*).

Source of Eternal Life (cf. *Romans 6:23; John 10:28; Galatians 6:8*).

Teacher (cf. *Isaiah 48:17; 54:13; John 14:26; Galatians 1:12; 1John 2:20*).

Source of Salvation (cf. *2Thessalonians 2:13-14; Titus 3:4-6; 1Peter 1:2*).

Baptism is done in the name of the Trinity (cf. *Matthew 28:19*), "baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Benediction is given naming each Person of the Trinity (cf. *2Corinthians 13:14*), "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.*"

You can pray equally to either the Father or the Son, although there is no single verse where prayer is offered to Holy Spirit, but clearly prayers are made effectual by the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 6:18**), "pray at all times in [through] the Spirit."

The Lord taught His followers to pray (**Matthew 6:9**) "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed [Holy] be Your name.'"

Some believe we must direct our Prayers to the Father only; but I assure you that you can pray to the Son [Jesus Christ] just as fervently, as Scripture declares. **John 14:13**, "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

John 16:23, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you."

Acts 7:59, "They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

1Corinthians 1:2, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours."

Back to **1Thessalonians 3:12...** Paul's desire for the Thessalonians, as he prays for them to the Father and the Son, is that God will increase their love for one another, and for all people, just as the love that Paul, Silas and Timothy have for them is increasing.

Paul exhorts them through prayer to increase their love for "all people," speaking of those who are not yet believers, but also of those who persecute the believers, as they have already experienced (see **1Thessalonians 2:14-16a**).

Jesus commanded His disciples (**Matthew 5:44**), "*love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*"; (**Luke 6:27b-28**), "*love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you*";

and Paul reiterates this in (**Romans 12:14**), "*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*"

The expression of God's love [*agape, noun*] is the hallmark of true Christianity, and the verb form of this Divine love [*agapao*], as John MacArthur explains, "expresses the purest, noblest form of love, which is volitionally driven, not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship." Let me simplify that by saying, true love from above is expressed as an act of will and intent to do what needs to be done, without consideration of the condition or merit of the recipient, e.g., **John 3:16** says, "*God so love the world that He gave His One and Only Son.*" **Romans 5:8** tells us, "*God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*"

Philippians 2:8 says Jesus "*humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*" **Romans 8:1**, "*Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*"

So, in **1Thessalonians 3:11**, Paul is praying for God to get him back to see the believers in Thessalonica; in **1Thessalonians 3:12**, Paul is praying for the Lord to increase the love of the believers in Thessalonica for all people, just as Paul serves as an example to them by the way he loved them before they were saved, and now that they are believers.

Paul's heart motive in all of this is stated in **1Thessalonians 3:13**, "so that He [God] may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints."

I believe an "established heart without blame" is the heart of a righteous person, one who has been made holy, having been justified before God through personal faith in Jesus Christ: crucified, resurrected, coming again.

2Corinthians 5:21 declares, "*He [God the Father] made Him [God the Son, Jesus Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*"

The good news is that Jesus is coming back, and when He returns to get us, He will be coming (**1Thessalonians 3:13**) "with all His saints." That is speaking about what is referred to as the rapture of the church, which we will be studying when we get to **1Thessalonians 4:13-18**.

But for now, take a quick look at **1Thessalonians 4:14, 17...** This is talking about a future event when God's Son will return in the air, bringing with Him all those who belong to Him by faith, who have already died.

Paul gives us some insight in **2Corinthians 5:6-8**, "*knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by*

sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord” [absent from the body, present with the Lord].

Philippians 1:21-23, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better” [absent from the body, present with the Lord].

At the moment talked about in **1Thessalonians 4:17**, at Christ’s return, all those who belong to Him who are still alive on the earth will be joined with all those who belong to Him who have already died, so that all believers will receive their immortal and incorruptible bodies made for eternity in heaven.

The word “rapture” [from the Latin “raptus”] means, “to catch away,” “to seize,” “to snatch up.” This will be instantaneous, in fact Paul says it will happen, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (**1Corinthians 15:52**).

Back to **1Thessalonians 3:11-13**... Paul’s desire is for all believers to be established and steadfast in their faith, belief, and practice, so that at the return of Christ they will be found blameless, ready to receive their reward from the Lord. **Revelation 22:12**, “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”

On that last night Jesus spent with His disciples, He told them repeatedly that He was leaving to go to the Father but that He would come back to get them and take them to be where He was.

John 14:2-3, “I go to prepare a place for you... ..I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

John 14:12, “Truly, truly, I say to you... ..I go to the Father.”

John 14:28, ...“I go away, and I will come to you.’ ...I go to the Father.”

John 16:10, “I go to the Father and you no longer see Me.”

John 16:28, “I came from the Father... ..I am leaving the world to go the Father.”

John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

John 17:24, “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me.” **26**, “I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

As Christians, we are born again by God’s Spirit, as children of God the Father, and servants of Jesus Christ who died for us, was buried, rose on the third day, ascended into heaven, and will return to take us to be with Him forever.

That is our destiny, that is God's Truth! So, what should our daily response be to the COVID-19 world around us, and to all those who live on this planet?

Colossians 3:17, *"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. 23-24, ..."do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."*

1Corinthians 15:58, *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."*

Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.