

II Thessalonians 3:1-5 & 1:10-12

There are so many evil things happening in this world. You hear so many bad news daily. There are more and more deceitful things and frauds happening these days, from stealing your credit card number, malicious email and text to financial scandal. Much so in the religious world today, there are more and more false Biblical teachings, false prophecies and cults. We need prayer and more prayers just like the days of the letter II Thessalonians, and thus we can learn from this letter. Besides prayers, Paul corrected them and encouraged them.

The book of II Thessalonians in the New Testament was written by Paul along with Silas and Timothy to church members in Thessalonica. Paul wrote this letter approximately A.D. 51 at Corinth (Acts 18:1 & 18:5) shortly after the first letter (within one year). Thessalonica was an important seaport city in today's Greece. It was a key communication and trade center, and various races lived in the region. There were some false teachings about Jesus' second coming among members in the church. Paul wrote this letter to clarify and condemn the false teachings, and to encourage the Christians to stand firm. Told them to continue to work, and follow God while they were anticipating Jesus' second coming. Paul prayed for the Thessalonians and requested them to pray for him also.

1) Pray for spread of God's message

II Thes. 3:1 described the prayer request for a fast spread of the Lord's message including the Good News of salvation. This is really the key purpose of our Lord Jesus came to earth. This shall be the highest priority in our prayer list. This prayer shall be for individuals like friends and family members to groups of people including local churches, countries and races.

2) Pray for protection from evil and give strength

II Thes. 3:2-3 asked to be delivered from wicked and evil people. Evil always tries to stop us from following God and to be close to God. This is especially true for hindering us from doing God's will such as to spread the gospel. Cults and false teachings are another way evils try to attack us. This request of deliverance is the same as what Jesus told us how to pray in Matt. 6:13. We shall ask God to protect His children from evil and give them strength.

3) Pray for the love towards God and to imitate Christ's perseverance

II Thes. 3:5 is about asking God to direct our hearts to love God. The more love you have towards God, the more you will be able to listen to His voice and follow Him. God's perseverance is also very important. We often can't wait for God to get rid of the evils or answer our prayers as we want it immediately. God uses our time while we wait patiently to prompt us to seek God and to build our faith.

4) Pray for worthy of His calling

Paul prayed for the Thessalonians in II Thes. 1:11 that a) "God may make you worthy of his calling, and b) by His power He may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith". There are two sides of this prayer – to God and to Thessalonians. When Paul prayed, the conditions for the Thessalonians are: a) they actually follow God's calling, and b) they need to have the desires for goodness and to perform deeds prompted by faith. When the Thessalonians actually started to do those, Paul's prayer was God would fulfill those to fruition.

Each group of Christians and each individual Christian has general callings such as to spread the Good News, and specific callings. We need to pray for fellow Christians to know his/her/their callings and actually act on them, and at the same time ask God to help that person or group of people to fulfill those callings.

5) Name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him

To extend the flow of II Thes. 1:11, verse 12 describes the consequence. Paul prayed that the ultimate result would lead to "the name of our Lord Jesus be glorified in you, and you in Him". When we glorify God with our lives, God will give us glory.

When we know God and His words well, we are able to distinguish the truth versus false teaching. Prayers have to go hand-in-hand with Biblical knowledge. A website has identified 12 different cults being claimed as Christianity in China. Years ago, there was a lady that has just attended my former local church, and her "Christianity" charisma has attracted a few church members but her belief was actually a cult under the Christianity name. Then, some senior church members prayed and talked to those members that have associated with and partly influenced by her. Finally, those church members were clear about the truth, and

know the falsehood in that cult. That cult lady left the church afterward. Praise the Lord for answering prayer. Nowadays' cult situation is near identical to the time of II Thessalonians. God helped His children to overcome as was done in my former local church, and God being glorified.