

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

A Plea to Pray for Your Spiritual Leaders 1 Thessalonians 5:25-28 Part 2

We are very slowly approaching the end of 1 Thessalonians. We have now entered into the PS of this epistle and it contains three exhortations and a benediction. As I have shared with you last week. The postscript of an epistle should be carefully considered just like a postscript of a letter. These are the very last thoughts the writer has chosen to leave with his readers and therefore should be looked at closely.

The very first exhortation was an exhortation for the Thessalonians to pray for Paul and his companions. Let us read **V. 25 “Brethren, pray for us.”** Paul, Silas, and Timothy were in essence the spiritual leaders of this congregation even though at this time they were separated from the Thessalonian Church. It therefore is important for those in positions of oversight to ask for the prayers of those who they care for.

Not only do the scriptures clearly indicate to us the importance of spiritual leaders praying for the people but the scriptures also indicate the need for the people to be praying for their spiritual leaders. I want you to know that I am striving in this area on your behalf. And I hope that you will do the same for all those who are in positions of spiritual oversight in this fellowship.

If our fellowship is going to be all that it can be. If our fellowship is going to do all that it can do. If our fellowship is truly going to offer up sacrifices that are pleasing to the Lord then we need to be praying for one another. It is not sufficient for the spiritual leaders alone to be praying. It is not sufficient for the people alone to be praying. It is essential that we strive together in our prayers for the church and for one another. **WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF THINGS THAT THE CHURCH CAN PRAY FOR IN RESPECT TO THEIR SPIRITUAL LEADERS?**

We can pray for their safety? We can pray for their physical and spiritual safety. Last week we saw how the Apostle Paul asked his brothers in Christ to do exactly this.

We see that the Paul asked the Roman church to pray for his physical safety as he anticipated trouble on his upcoming visit to Jerusalem in **Romans 15:30-31**. And we saw how Paul asked the Philippian church to pray for his spiritual safety, not wanting to be put to shame in anything, while under Roman arrest and at the same time being mistreated by certain members of the Roman Church in **Philippians 1:15-20**. **WHAT ELSE CAN WE PRAY FOR?**

WE CAN PRAY FOR THEIR PLANS (Rom. 15:30-31)

Do we see an example of this in the New Testament? Do we see Paul actually asking believers to pray for his plans? And I believe that the answer is yes. Paul frequently asked believers to pray for his plans.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Let us go back to a passage that we referenced last week, **Rom. 15:30,31**. What do these verses say? **“Now I urge you brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, (31) that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints.”** What is Paul asking them to do for him? He is asking them to pray for the success of his plans.

What were his plans? Paul had spearheaded an offering for poor Jewish saints in Jerusalem and Judaea. Certainly he did this in order to meet a real genuine need within the Judean churches. Certainly he did this as an expression of love. But more importantly he did this in order to help unite the Jews and Gentiles in the church. But Paul was somewhat apprehensive as to whether the Jewish church would receive this offering in a way that would bind their hearts with the hearts of the gentile churches which explains why Paul worded his request as he did, **“..... that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints.”**

Paul had a plan but he truly did not know that it would be successful. Hopefully you might see a parallel in terms of our own prayers. Hopefully as a church when the leadership of the church devises a plan that the church would get behind their leaders in prayer.

I feel so sorry for church leaders who rather than having the prayer support of their churches in the plans that they hopefully prayerfully develop meet only opposition, resistance, or worse yet apathy. Just as Paul felt the need for the prayers of the churches in regard to his plans the spiritual overseers of this fellowship need your prayers in regard to our current plans.

We at this present time are moving to strengthen our adult ministries with an expanded Sunday School in the fall. We are beginning to explore the possibility of an expanded women's ministry this coming year. We are looking to the Lord to show us the way in building on the success of our recent Mexico trip as well as our Vacation Bible School. We are asking the Lord for wisdom to know how to respond to the continued numerical growth of our congregation. **PRAY FOR YOUR LEADERS. PRAY FOR THEIR SAFETY. PRAY FOR THE SUCCESS OF THEIR PLANS. WHAT ELSE CAN WE PRAY FOR?**

PRAY FOR EFFECTIVE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

Effectiveness in ministry just does not happen. At least we would have to conclude that the Apostle Paul certainly believed this. For he on numerous occasions asked for prayer, for very specific items related to the effectiveness of his proclamation ministry.

He prayed for open doors. In **Col. 4:2** we read, **“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; (3) praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word.”** There are places in the world that have been very closed to a gospel presentation. Certainly one of those places is Japan. As a church we attempting to ministry to this great nation the good news of the gospel and God has been faithful to open doors for us. He has opened the door of ministry by providing a close relationship with Hamadera Bible Church. He has opened the door of ministry by allowing us to send Randy and Rebecca Thompson to Japan.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

He has opened the door of ministry by providing upwards of Japanese people taking English classes from them. We do not open doors God opens doors. We must pray that God may continue to open the doors of ministry for our church and that the leaders of the church will be able to have eyes to see those doors. He not only prayed for open doors but for boldness to go through those doors.

He prayed for the boldness to go through those doors. In **Eph. 6** as he is listing for the Ephesians the various components of the armor of God, he concludes with these words in **VV. 18,19** **“With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, (19) and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.”**

Paul asked the Ephesians not only to persevere in their prayers for one another but for himself that he might speak and speak boldly..... Paul in the first of the three concluding exhortations at the end of this epistle is exhorting the Thessalonians as brothers to pray for him and his companions. What is the second exhortation? Let us read **V. 26** **“Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.”** Paul is exhorting the Thessalonians to express physical affection with the brethren.

AN EXHORTATION TO EXPRESS PHYSICAL AFFECTION WITHIN THE CHURCH

This is a common exhortation found at the end of many of Paul’s epistles. We see the same exhortation in Romans 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12. Even Peter got into it in 1 Pet. 5:14. He is calling the Thessalonians to greet the brethren with a **“holy kiss.”**

Now it is important to note that he is exhorting them to greet one another not just with a “kiss” but rather a “holy kiss.” Apparently Paul recognized that there was a possibility of a kiss being “unholy.” Paul recognized that it might be possible for a kiss to be something other than a sign of physical affection. But even so Paul is apparently willing to take the risk and he exhorts them to do this.

What about ourselves should we along with Paul participate in this practice and encourage others to do so also. Before we can answer this question we need to know more about this so called “holy kiss.” First of all the “holy kiss” that he is speaking about was not a kiss on the lips. Rather it most likely was a kiss on the cheek. Also “the holy kiss” was practiced not with members of the opposite sex but with members of the same sex. Men were not kissing women and women were not kissing men but rather men were kissing men and women were kissing women. Kissing in this manner was a common and culturally acceptable way to express physical affection.

If we were to seek to duplicate this practice today in our time and in our culture it actually may be problematic. Certainly women may be able to get away with kissing women in our culture but it would be more difficult for men to kiss men. Why? For the very simple reason that this is not something we commonly see except on news broadcasts from other parts of the world. If this is so then how can we be faithful to apply this biblical exhortation to our own lives?

All we have to do is to understand that Paul believed that it was important that the brethren be physically demonstrative with their affection.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

In Paul's time it would be done by men kissing men and women kissing women today in our culture it most likely would be a warm handshake, a hug or touch on the arm or shoulder.

IT IS NOT SO MUCH WHAT WE DO BUT THAT WE DO UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST WOULD BE DEMONSTRATIVE WITH THEIR AFFECTION AND THAT THEY WOULD DO IT IN WAYS THAT THEY AND OTHERS WOULD BE COMFORTABLE WITH. There is a third exhortation in **V. 27** **“I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.”**

Not only are we to pray for our spiritual leaders, not only are we to express physical affection for the brethren but we also need to make sure that the brethren are being exposed to the scriptures.

AN EXHORTATION TO EXPOSE ALL THE BRETHREN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Let us look again at **V. 27** it is a very strong statement, **“I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.”** To adjure means to “bind with an oath.” Paul in essence is saying that he as an apostle of Christ is representing the Lord and Jesus wants every one of the Thessalonian brethren to hear what Paul has written.

Why the emphasis on reading? We need to remember that they did not have the technological abilities that we have to make copies of things. And besides even if they were able to put a copy into the hands of every believer at Thessalonica, many of those people could not read. **SO IT NEEDED TO BE READ.** It was God's message and everyone needed to hear and understand. Nothing has changed. The Lord still wants his message heard. And each week we at Valley are seeking to be faithful to this responsibility.

CONCLUSION

The apostle concludes this epistle with three very important exhortations.

An exhortation to pray for our spiritual leaders.

An exhortation to express physical affection to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

An exhortation to expose all of the brethren to the scriptures.

He now follows these exhortations with a final benediction.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

PAUL'S BENEDICTION

The apostle now finishes this epistle with a benediction in **V. 28** **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”**

Grace is the heart of our theology. Grace is simply God's unmerited favor. We have been saved by grace and we are being saved by grace. The Lord's grace continues to flow to the lives of those who love Him and are seeking to serve Him on a daily basis. The Thessalonians were the recipients of God's grace and Paul's prayer is that they might continue to be recipients of God's grace.

If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior you are the recipients of God's grace and His grace continues to be available to you. There is a hymn entitled “He giveth more grace.” And the words go like this. “He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater, He sendeth more strength when the labors increase; To added affliction He addeth His mercy, to multiplied trials, His multiplied peace. His love has no limit, His grace has no measure, His power has no boundary known unto men; for out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth and giveth, and giveth again.”