

1 Thes. 1:2-3; 2:13-14; 3:8-13; 5:23-24 “Paul’s First Prayer for the Thessalonians”**

Main Idea: Paul’s first prayer for the Thessalonians as recorded in 1 Thessalonians included two key elements.

I. Paul expressed thanks to God (1:2-3; 2:13-14; 3:8-9).

- A. He thanked God for the demonstration of their faith (1:3a).
- B. He thanked God for the demonstration of their love (1:3b).
 - 1. Love is more than feeling and talk.
 - 2. Love shows up in action.
- C. He thanked God for the demonstration of their hope (1:3c).
- D. He thanked God for the way they treated God’s Word (2:13).
- E. He thanked God for the way they suffered (2:14).
- F. He thanked God for the God-centered joy they gave him (3:8-9).

II. Paul expressed requests to God (3:10-13; 5:23-24).

- A. May God allow us to see and serve you again (3:10-11).
 - 1. People who have faith still need to grow in their faith.
 - 2. People who have a growing faith want to help others grow.
- B. May God make your love increase and overflow (3:12).
- C. May God strengthen your hearts so you will be blameless and holy (3:13).
 - 1. Lasting change works from the top down.
 - 2. Lasting change works from the inside out.
- D. May God sanctify you (5:23a).
 - 1. God isn’t interested in partial change.
 - 2. God is committed to total transformation.
- E. May God keep you blameless at Christ’s coming (5:23b-24).
 - 1. We need to live with the big picture in mind.
 - 2. We need to live this day in light of that day.

Take Inventory: Ask yourself two important questions...

- 1. When I pray, am I thanking God for what He has done?
- 2. When I pray, am I asking God for things that will matter for eternity?

What do dads need most? That's a good question to ponder on this Father's Day, a question no doubt some of you have wrestled with this past week as you contemplated what you might give your own father today. What *do* dads need most? A gift is nice, like a tie, or a box of golf balls, but that's not what they need most? Your love? That's certainly important, but again, is that what they need most? No. In fact, what dads need most you can't give them.

But let's expand that thought. What's true of dads is also true of moms and children and friends and every other person God has placed in our lives. What they need most *we can't give them*. That's, of course, because what they need most is not some created thing, but the Creator God Himself. Jesus said in John 10:10, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." The source of life to the full is Jesus Christ. He is the only one who can give a person what that person needs the most. Jesus put it this way when He prayed in John 17:3, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."

So what dads need most, and moms need most, and children need most isn't something you can buy at Wal Mart. That's why there are dads all over this country today that have everything money can buy, as well as the loving support of a devoted wife and children (and grandchildren), and yet they still feel hollow, like something's missing. And even if they *don't* feel hollow, something is missing, according to Jesus, for life that is abundant and eternal is available from Him and indeed *is* Him.

Now here's an awesome thought. Although you can't give your dad (nor anyone else) what he needs most, *you can talk to the One who can!* If you know Christ as your Savior, you have direct access to the throne of God in prayer.

This summer we're going to the school of prayer. Our teacher for this important class is the apostle Paul. Our text of study will be the epistles that Paul wrote. Tucked away inside of these letters that Paul wrote to churches and individuals, we find a considerable amount of material that tells us what Paul was praying for them. He knew that what they needed most he could not give them, but God could. And he asked God to do so again and again.

Last week we introduced the series by going to the book of Acts and examining the texts that show Paul praying. We saw him praying and fasting with church leaders in Antioch, praying from a jail cell in Philippi, praying with the Ephesian elders on a beach, and praying on a ship en route to Rome.

The question we want to begin to address this week is *what* he prayed. We're going to look at his recorded prayers chronologically, from earliest to latest. We'll start today with his prayer recorded in 1 Thessalonians, which he wrote around AD 51. Next week we'll examine his prayer in 2 Thessalonians, which he wrote about six months later. Then comes his prayer for the Corinthian believers (AD 55) and for the church in Rome as recorded in Romans (AD 57). Next we'll look at the prayers he prayed and wrote while in prison, the "prison epistles," in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians (AD 60-61), as well as prayers for two friends, Philemon (AD 60) and Timothy (recorded in 2 Timothy in AD 66-67).

Paul had a special relationship with the believers in the city of Thessalonica. He met them during his second missionary journey, as recorded in Acts 17. As was his custom wherever he went, Paul headed for the synagogue and preached the good news about Messiah Jesus for three Sabbaths. Some Jews believed. So did a large number of Greeks, including some prominent women in this seaport city.

But then, out of jealousy, certain Jews tried to blackmail Paul and Silas, causing a riot. A mob stormed the house of Jason, a believer who had opened his house to Paul, in search of Paul and Silas. When they couldn't find the missionaries, the mob arrested Jason and some other believers, made them post bond, and eventually set them free. Paul and Barnabas left Thessalonica that night under the cover of darkness, leaving behind an infant church in a city of wolves.

Out of sight but not out of mind certainly captured Paul's thought of the Thessalonians. It wasn't long before Paul wrote a letter to his spiritual children, probably his first inspired letter. We call it 1 Thessalonians. It's a warm, encouraging letter, filled with pastoral counsel for young believers facing persecution. And, for our purposes, it's a letter filled with indicators of what Paul was praying for his friends.

Paul's first prayer for the Thessalonians as recorded in 1 Thessalonians included two key elements. Let's ponder them one at a time. First....

I. Paul expressed thanks to God (1:2-3; 2:13-14; 3:8-9).

Notice 1: 2, "We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers." Notice that for Paul thanksgiving wasn't just a feeling inside, but an activity. He says that he, Silas, and Timothy thanked *God* for the *Thessalonians*. That indicates that Paul spent time expressing his appreciation to God for the people he met and loved in Thessalonica. He thanked *God* for them.

That points out that if there was anything good happening in the church in Thessalonica (and there was, as we'll see), it was because of God. "Every good gift comes from above," says James 1:17. And when God does something good, He deserves our thanks for it. All glory belongs to Him!

But Paul didn't just thank God for these believers. He told them so. Why? Some people think, "Well, if I commend people for the good things I see happening in their lives, they might get a big head and God would be robbed of honor." Perhaps, but that didn't keep Paul from doing so. He encouraged his brothers and sisters by telling them exactly what he was thanking God for in their lives, with the focus on *God*.

We could learn from this. When we see God's grace at work in a brother's life, we ought to first thank God for it, and then let our brother know. D. A. Carson illustrates, "Bob, I thank God for the faithfulness you display in your task as an usher. I can't help but noticing how you greet everyone by name, even the smallest child, and that you arrive early and go out of your way to make everyone welcome. I thank God for your ministry." And, "Pat, I constantly thank God for your influence not only in the nursery, but on the parents who bring their children there. Only heaven will disclose what good God has accomplished through you."¹¹

Now, what was it in the Thessalonians' lives for which Paul thanked God? He mentions six things throughout the letter, the first three in the very next verse. Verse 3—"We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

A. He thanked God for the demonstration of their faith (1:3a). He says He continually thanked God the Father for "your work produced by faith." Please notice that faith works. True faith produces works. When a person comes to believe in Jesus Christ, when he puts his trust in the atoning work that Jesus Christ accomplished when He gave His life on the cross to pay sin's penalty, God justifies that sinner, declaring him to be righteous in the sight of God. Consequently, that now justified sinner begins to live rightly in the sight of men.

For the Thessalonians, it happened in the hospital nursery. As soon as they were born into God's family, they were put to the fiery test. Jason opened his home to the missionaries, knowing it could cost him dearly. And it did. He's a three week old Christian, and he's thrown in prison for his faith. And his faith worked. True faith always does.

B. He thanked God for the demonstration of their love (1:3b). "Your labor prompted by love," says Paul. Like faith, true love also demonstrates its presence. Contrary to Hollywood ...

1. *Love is more than feeling and talk.* Does it include feelings? Sure, at times more than others. Does it include talk? Again, yes. But God's kind of love, the fruit of the Spirit kind of love, is much more than feeling and talk. As Paul here acknowledged...

2. *Love shows up in action.* Love prompts a born-again person to exhibit *labor*. The Greek word is *kopos* which refers to laborious toil (Paul used the term elsewhere to describe the backbreaking work he did making tents, the physical exertion). When there's persecution, love must demonstrate itself or the church would perish. When a dad is thrown in prison for his faith, aside from the emotional heartache they'll feel, the mother and kids are going to have to do dad's work too just to put food on the table.

C. He thanked God for the demonstration of their hope (1:3c). “Your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” What produces endurance? Hope does. The certain anticipation of what’s coming, that’s what produces hope.

I remember the month of August as a high school cross country runner. Grueling, intense workouts, twice a day at times, three or four miles in the morning, eight, ten, or more miles in the later day heat. What keeps a runner going when his body feels like it’s dying one step at a time? The first Saturday in October did, at least for us. That’s when the state cross country meet would take place, and that’s when the endurance would reap a harvest.

The Christian life isn’t easy. The Thessalonians learned that painful truth right out of the blocks. It takes endurance to stay in the race, and it’s the hope of the outcome that keeps us going. More specifically, our hope is in a *person*, in what that person *did* for us, and what that person *will do* for us on that day. Our endurance is inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith, love, and hope—these are the hallmark traits of the true Christian, produced by Christ through the ministry of His Spirit in the lives of God’s people. And these virtues produce a visible demonstration in the Christian’s life, as expressed by work, labor, and endurance. And when present, these are worthy incentives for giving thanks to God.

In case you’re wondering how Paul knew this fruit was on the trees in Thessalonica, we’re told in 3:6 that Timothy had just returned from a visit. It tore Paul to pieces to leave his spiritual children behind when he fled the city, and he wanted to return but couldn’t. So he sent Timothy to check on them and encourage them (see 3:6-8).

Let’s move to Paul’s second “thanks text” in the letter...

D. He thanked God for the way they treated God’s Word (2:13). “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.”

I have highest admiration for pioneer missionaries. To go to a place where the name of Jesus Christ has never been heard with the goal of not only telling the people there about Jesus, but aiming to see them turn from their idolatrous ways to Christ, now that’s an awesome task! That’s what our brother Bob Litteral faced when he moved to the remote jungles of PNG in the 1960s. Centuries before, Adoniram Judson faced it, as did William Carey before him, and many others.

Now think of what Paul and Silas faced the day these two first-century pioneer missionaries entered that massive city of 200,000 people. And remember, these weren’t religiously neutral people either. The Jews in Thessalonica were zealous adherents of Judaism, and the Greeks were devoted polytheists. How in the world are you going to penetrate a city like that? It’s the same way Judson later penetrated Burma, Carey penetrated India, and Bob and Shirley penetrated the Angkor villages in PNG. You give them God’s Word.

Why would you do that? Because the Word of God is the instrument that the Spirit of God works through to regenerate hearts that are dead in sin. Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). James 1:18 explains, “He [that’s God, the Father of lights] chose to give us birth through the word of truth.”

When God does that, when He uses His Word to birth into His family those who were once dead in sin, He deserves *thanks* for it, from the new babes as well as from the preachers.

When people receive the Word of God that you share with them, that is a spiritual miracle, and not to be taken for granted! We *thank God* for that, says Paul, that when we preached the Word to you, you received it. We thank God because if it wasn’t for Him you wouldn’t have received it. And when you did receive it, you acknowledged it was God’s Word and not merely man’s word.

“My sheep hear my voice,” said Jesus. That’s yet another mark of a true sheep. When the preacher preaches the Word of God, the true sheep recognizes the voice of the divine Shepherd in the word he hears.

And notice the present tense activity of that word, as verse 13 concludes, "which is at work in you who believe." Paul thanked the Lord not only for what His Word *did* in the Thessalonians, but for what it was *doing*. And that brings us to a fifth reason for thanks.

E. He thanked God for the way they suffered (2:14). Notice the very next verse, verse 14, "For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews..."

The fact is, suffering is inevitable in a sin-cursed world. Disease. Hurricanes. War. Pestilence. But Paul has a particular kind of suffering in mind here, suffering for the sake of being a follower of Christ. And the Thessalonian believers did that *well*, so well that they earned a solid reputation for it, as Paul explained at the beginning of the letter.^[2] And Paul thanked God for it.

Let's not miss the lesson here. When God's people suffer well (and by *well* I mean they make the gospel attractive by the Spirit-generated fortitude and joy they exhibit as they suffer), let's not miss the opportunity to thank the One who made that possible.

There's one more "thanks text" in the letter, this one in chapter three. It comes right after Paul announces that Timothy has returned with an update from Thessalonica. Listen to 3:8-9, "For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?" Simply put...

F. He thanked God for the God-centered joy they gave him (3:8-9). "For now we *really live*," says Paul. What is *really living* for you? A bigger house? Tickets to a NASCAR race? A vacation in the Bahamas? Did you catch what *really living* was for Paul? "For now we really live, *since you are standing firm in the Lord*." Seeing my spiritual children standing firm in Christ, says Paul, it doesn't get any better than that! I can't thank God enough for you, for the joy I have in God's presence because of you!

There's the first key element of Paul's prayer, *thanks to God*. Perhaps it goes without saying, but don't miss that Paul was thankful for people. And it wasn't because the people were doing things *for him*. Nor was it because the people didn't have some areas where growth was needed, for they did, as we'll see next. He expressed thanks to God because he saw the evidence of God's work in their lives, work that exalted Christ, and work that was causing Christ's testimony to spread to others, and that thrilled Paul!

What thrills you? One of the byproducts of studying Paul's prayers is that our priorities are challenged. Paul lived with a very distinct, Christ-centered set of values, and if we want to learn to pray like Paul, we may well need to change some values we hold. If you value your health more than holiness, you won't pray like Paul. If you value your own comfort more than the advance of the gospel, you won't pray like Paul.

Here's the second element of Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians. First, *thanks*, then

II. Paul expressed requests to God (3:10-13; 5:23-24).

Five requests, to be specific. In the NIV the requests are highlighted by the word "may." *May* God do this for you... and *may* God do that for you... and so on. The requests flow right out of the thanks. We see the first request right after the sixth cause for thanksgiving in chapter three.

But before we ponder the actual requests, allow me to make a general observation about Paul's prayers. When Paul prayed he used some pretty specific and strategic language, a far cry from the "Lord, bless so and so" prayers that often come from my lips. That says something to us, namely, that when it comes to prayer, *vocabulary matters*. Granted, God sees the heart, but prayer is essentially talking to God, and talking involves using words that communicate thoughts and feelings and desires. The words matter.

We know this in other areas of our lives. Some of you are good at mechanics, working on cars for instance. If a mechanic came to my house and helped me work on my car, he wouldn't say, "Hand me that thing that looks like a stick with a round handle on the end." Rather he would say, "Hand me that *screwdriver*." And in order for us to work well together I would need to learn some basic vocabulary regarding the tools used in automotive repair, like wrench, socket set, and so on.

The same is true in athletics. If you want to play sports or simply enjoy watching sports, you have to learn some vocabulary. I can still remember the time a Hungarian immigrant came to our living room when I was about nine years old. We were watching the Baseball All Star game on television and the announcer said, "Oh, that's a strike for sure. He broke his wrists." And our guest got wide-eyed, stared at the television and said, "Someone broke his wrists?" Just think of all the vocabulary you had to learn, sports fans, in order to appreciate the games you enjoy: pick and roll, cleanup batter, bullpen, let the air out of the ball, a three-four defense, and more.

In order to pray, in one sense, words aren't even needed (for the Spirit helps us "with groans that words cannot express," says Romans 8:26). Yet in order to pray *meaningfully*, words do matter. When you read Paul's prayers you'll see him using important terms and phrases like 'sanctify', 'spirit of wisdom', 'enlightened', 'the hope of his calling', and so on. Behind those words and phrases are important concepts and truths that Paul understood and that shaped what he wanted to express to God.

Part of what we'll be doing in our current series is developing and expanding our vocabulary so we can pray more meaningfully, so we can express more intentionally to God what we mean, using biblical language that's precise and God-honoring.

Now let's look at Paul's first request for the Thessalonians, stated in 3:10-11, "Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you." There's the first "may"...

A. May God allow us to see and serve you again (3:10-11). Do you ever struggle with sleepless nights? Right here's a suggestion for how to make the insomnia profitable. Use the time to pray. That's what Paul did. He brought a request to the Lord earnestly day after day, and also at night. And what was the request? He asked God to allow him to see his brothers and sisters in Thessalonica. Why? Was Paul lonely? Did he miss some of the Greek cuisine he tasted while there? No. The purpose of the desired trip wasn't for his sake, but theirs. He wanted to see them so he could *serve* them.

And how specifically did he want to serve them? He says he wanted to "supply what is lacking in your faith." That's interesting. Back in chapter one he said he was thankful for their faith. But now he indicates their faith was lacking. What does that tell us about faith? A couple of things...

1. *People who have faith still need to grow in their faith.* Faith isn't static. It's like a balloon that expands when it's filled with air. Or better still, it's like a body that grows as it receives proper nourishment and care.

The Thessalonians entered the family of God the moment the Holy Spirit convicted and regenerated their hearts, and they responded by putting their trust, their *faith* in Christ Jesus. "For by grace are you saved *through faith*," says Ephesians 2:8. And that was cause for thanksgiving for Paul, for "your work produced by faith," as he told them in 1:2.

But after saving faith comes *living* faith—that's faith for day by day living. When I was eleven I placed my faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, but every day since then I've needed to exercise faith, not saving faith again but *living* faith. When the bills mount and I can't see over them, or when I'm facing an interpersonal challenge, or whatever the test, I can either put my trust, my *faith*, in God and His promises, or I can trust in my own ability to work out the situation.

Paul said he wanted to come and "supply what is lacking in your faith." That indicates that we can help other people's faith grow. In fact...

2. *People who have a growing faith want to help others grow.* I like how the NLT captures Paul's ambition, "to fill the gaps in your faith." That's why he wanted to visit his brothers and sisters, to teach them truth that would fill in the gaps of their faith.

B. May God make your love increase and overflow (3:12). "May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you."

Ponder that first word, "may." *May* the Lord do this. The word indicates, first of all, that this was Paul's desire. It's what he wanted to see happen. But it also indicates Paul's *dependence*, for what he wanted he lacked the means to accomplish. Only God do this. So Paul asked him to do so!

The request? "May the Lord make your love increase." Hold on. Didn't he commend them for their love back in chapter one? Yes, but as with faith, so with love. It's supposed to be growing. You see, love is choice I make, enabled by God the Holy Spirit, to do what is in your best interest.

On July 23 Sherry and I, the Lord willing, will celebrate our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. I loved her twenty-five years ago, but my love for her has grown because I know her so much better than I did then. And even now, if I start coasting, we'll be in trouble, for each day brings new opportunities to demonstrate love for my bride.

But it's not just the quality of our love that needs to increase. Paul prayed that the *quantity* of it would increase, too. He prayed that the Thessalonians' love would increase "*for each other and for everyone else.*" Even the most hard-hearted pagan often has a circle of friends, but that's not the standard for us. The question isn't whether you show love to a few people. It's whether there's anybody you *don't* love.

"This is a hard, brutal world," writes D. A. Carson. "There are many...forms of pseudo-love... But Christian love, mature, deep, and unqualified, is a rare commodity. When it is displayed, it speaks volumes to a society that gorges itself in self-interest, lust, mutual-admiration pacts, even while it knows very little of love. Show me a church where the choir is known as the War Department, where people divide over evangelistic strategies or over the color of the carpet, and I'll show you a church that has not been praying along those lines for some time."^[3]

C. May God strengthen your hearts so you will be blameless and holy (3:13). "May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones."

That's God's agenda for believers. According to Ephesians 1:4 it's why the Father chose us and why Christ died for us, to make us "holy and blameless" in his sight. The fact that Paul prayed this prayer for the Thessalonians reveals what about the Thessalonians. It reveals there were some areas in their lives where they were not yet blameless and holy, right?

For instance, in 1 Thessalonians 4:3 Paul writes, "It is God's will...that you should avoid sexual immorality." And in verse 5 he adds that "each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen." Why would Paul give these instructions on how to prevent sexual immorality? It's because the Thessalonian believers needed it! Thessalonica was a cesspool of sexual temptation and some of these young believers were still wading in the pool.

In 4:11 he offers this instruction, "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands...so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders." What do those words of counsel imply? Apparently, some of the church members were doing things that, if not changed, would turn off non-Christians to Christ, like loafing and sponging off of others instead of working and earning a living.

How do people change? We learn a couple of vital essentials for lasting change here.

1. *Lasting change works from the top down.* Paul prayed that *He* (that's the Lord) would strengthen *your* hearts so that *you* (that's the believers in Thessalonica) will be blameless and holy." We don't have the power to change ourselves, not so as to please God. That's why Paul interceded for this friends, because he knew that lasting

change works *from the top down*. What's more...

2. *Lasting change works from the inside out*. "May he strengthen your *hearts* so that you will be blameless." In order for change to last it must occur *inside out*. First, the heart needs to be strengthened—there must be a *want to*, a desire, a fortitude on the inside, and only God can provide that. And then the outside must change and become blameless and holy. Paul's next prayer request builds on this...

D. May God sanctify you (5:23a). "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through." What's that teach us about change? Don't miss this...

1. *God isn't interested in partial change*. Rather...

2. *God is committed to total transformation*. Dads, do you ask God to sanctify your children through and through? We should, because that's God's agenda for them, to *sanctify* them, to make them holy like His Son, Jesus. He wants them to resemble Christ, not in part, not just on Sunday, but *through and through*, when they're in school, when they're in the locker room, at the sleepover, through and through. Sunday School teachers, that's a good prayer for your class members, too. As is Paul's last request...

E. May God keep you blameless at Christ's coming (5:23b-24). "May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it."

Do you hear the underlining implication in that prayer request? It's bottom line...

1. *We need to live with the big picture in mind*. What's that mean?

2. *We need to live this day in light of that day*. This day—that's today, Sunday, June 15. In light of *that day*—that's the day Jesus Christ returns. What's going to happen on that day? As we'll see next time in 2 Thessalonians 1, that day is going to be *pay back day*, for when Christ returns He's going to rescue those who've trusted in Him and punish those who haven't.

Now watch how Paul's fifth request fit with his first request. How does God sanctify the people under our care so they'll be blameless and holy at Christ's coming (that's Paul's fifth request)? The answer? God uses the ministry of His Word through people, hence Paul's first request, "Lord, let me go and see the Thessalonians so I can supply what is lacking." Do you see the connection? God uses *us*—dads, moms, Sunday School teachers, camp counselors—He uses our teaching of His Word, our modeling of holiness, AND He uses our prayers for the sake of those under our care in order that they be holy and blameless when Christ returns.

Before we close our Bibles, let's take inventory...

Take Inventory: In light of Paul's example, ask yourself two important questions...

1. *When I pray, am I thanking God for what He has done?* As you pray this week, thank God for the work He's doing in the lives of people you know. Thank Him for the demonstration of faith, love, and hope that you see in their lives. If you see a brother treating God's Word well, if you see a sister suffering well, if you're experiencing God-centered joy because of it, thank God for it, and tell them that you're thanking God, too.

2. *When I pray, am I asking God for things that will matter for eternity?* John Piper has rightly observed that prayer isn't an intercom in the den to call the butler for refreshments so our lives will be more comfortable. Rather prayer is like calling to the Commander in Chief on a walkie-talkie requesting reinforcements for the battle. Let's ask God this week for things that will matter throughout eternity!

****Note:** This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] D. A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, pp. 87-8.

[2] See 1 Thes 1:6-10 “...in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with joy...”

[3] D. A. Carson, p. 92-3.