

Series: Praying With Paul
Speaker: Kevin White

Sermon: Thankful Prayer
Date: April 27, 2025

Text: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

Cornerstone is built on prayer.

Every step.

Starting as an intentionally multicultural church - prayer.

Looking towards a building - prayer.

Building a community-like center - prayer.

Funding - prayer.

Programs built - prayer.

Moving through the pandemic - prayer.

This place is a place of miracles because of prayer. And it's not just those big milestone miracles, it's every single life that's impacted.

Every single story is a miracle that has come out of prayer.

Prayer is how we started, how we stay grounded and how we listen to hear God's direction.

We're in the middle of a series called, "Praying with Paul."

Today we're going to look at 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3. Our topic is, "Thankful Prayer."

Let me pray.

Father, we pray that you would speak to us...

Jesus we pray that you bring our hearts closer to you...

Spirit we pray that you would guide us on how to move forward...

Let's look at our passage today - a short one

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers.

We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (NIV).

Today we're going to talk about the persistence of Paul's prayers, the proximity of Paul's prayers and the perspective of Paul's prayers.

Some background information about the Thessalonians.

Paul went to the Thessalonians (with Timothy and Silas), preached the gospel and many people believed. Because of the many people who converted, there began to be persecution. Paul was forced to leave after a month. He was worried about these young believers and if they would be able to stay strong during their persecution. He sent Timothy back to check on them. Timothy reported back they were thriving. Encouraged by what he heard, Paul writes them a letter.

1. Persistence

We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers

Paul doesn't just throw up an occasional thank-you up to God. His prayers are consistent and constant - and filled with gratitude.

Thankful prayer is a habit and not just a moment. Is thankfulness the tone of your prayer life?

He has believers in all different cities, yet he carried them all in his heart.

Instead of only praying for his problems or people's problems, he prays because of what he sees in them.

Example: Pastor Ed/Nic - over 10 years between my trips - was like no time passed because he had been praying for me/us the whole time.

Visiting Pastor Ed in Nicaragua was incredible. He is the pastor of a large church which he is the main pastor for. He leads leaders, he preaches and teaches, he visits the congregation. He connects with those in the community. He hosts many mission's trips... yet in all that, he connects with me regularly on facebook and prays for me and supports me in my journey. He thanks God for us constantly and continually mentions us in his prayers. I wonder how God has blessed us because of the prayers of our partners in Nicaragua, Honduras and Thunder Bay?

2. Proximity

We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope.

They are family. Paul says "our." They did life together. And even though Paul is no longer with them when he writes, he still is connected to them.

It's interesting how he chooses to remember them. I'm sure there must have been some different dynamics happening at the church that were challenging. How do I know? Because the church is filled with people.

Author and Theologian D.A. Carson says "The church is people, people of whom I am a part... all of us are fallen people - forgiven, yes, and in the process of sanctification, but still a long way off from the perfection that will characterize the new heaven and the new earth. The church in short, is us."

What is your perception of the church? Of this church? Of the people who attend here? Do you see us a family?

Paul looks back at how God has been at work in their lives.

What do you remember when you think of others? Their mistakes? The things that annoy you about them? Or do you remember the work that God is doing in, through and around them?

Not to say that can't and shouldn't call things out - there are plenty of passages even in Paul's writing that do that. But what is God saying to us through this passage?

Paul chooses to remember how they lived out their faith - that kind of memory led to joy.

This kind of memory keeps us positively positioned towards other people.

Is there someone you need to remember differently? Someone you're critical of?

Can you ask God to help you see his work in them?

Paul prays for them remembering their faith, love and hope

Faith, love and hope

Faith - leads to work - not that we earn salvation, we live it out. It's not passive (James 2:14 - 26). Your faith should have work in it - your faith is something that happens and is happening.

We work because we are near to God and we trust him.

Love - leads to labour - the hard kind, the sacrificial kind. It costs something. It's the evidence of salvation. We serve Christ because we love him. The Greek is "kupos" meaning labour, work, bother, trouble, difficulty. More than just small acts of kindness. It's laborious toil, hardship for love's sake.

Your labour prompted by love - Our actions (and prayer) should be prompted by our love for God and others (that's Biblical justice... to love God and love others)

Hope - produces endurance - especially in suffering. It keeps going. Hope is an evidence of salvation - looking forward to Jesus' return (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

Greek is "elpis" - hope, expectation.

Not a passive sufferer. Think of a marathon runner. Think of a soldier. Hope has certainty about it - confident expectation.

Although evil is strong it does not have the last word.

It's an aggressive and courageous Christian quality. Only possible because of the hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul sees this fruit and he thanks God for it because it shows him that God is at work.

Your endurance inspired by hope - We can do these things even in the hard times because of hope in Christ.

The good news is that God is at work in Cornerstone in the same way

Faith - have you seen new believers growing in faith (baptisms...)

Talk about testimonies last week

- A YA who grew up in the church taking that next step
- A youth whose dad works here making a choice to choose God for herself
- A young man whose cousins, aunts and uncles have had an incredible impact on his journey
- A husband and wife who have been attending for less than six months deciding to take that step together
- A youth saying they've never seen anything like this...

A faith that is not passive. It's persistent.

Love - have you watched someone serve others when no one notices - Mike Delaney. People who fixed the screen.

That's proximity. That's love that costs something. Cost a whole bunch of people their Saturday night - then they came early the next day and were here all day...

Hope - have you seen someone keep going through hard times with hope?

As a pastor I get to hear the stories of many of you. It always inspires to see how you serve despite what you are going through.

When I was going through a hard time, I wanted to be like you. So I kept on keeping on.

That's hope.

That's what I think of when I think of you. So I always thank God for all of you continually and remember you in my prayers.

We all should be doing that for each other.

3. **Perspective**

...inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ

All this is possible because of God's love - we just celebrated it at Easter. God made us his own before we knew him or loved him or believed. It's about the love and grace.

Our hope is not unfounded. It's not wishful thinking. It's based on the power of the resurrection. It's based on the fact that Jesus will return. Jesus is going to save that day. Not just in the future but here and now.

Paul knew this... he experienced this..

This is the only way we accomplish anything, by faith, love, and hope. By being near God, loving his people, and staying strong in his promises. This should be the foundation of all of our thankful prayers as we remember each other.

Application

Name three people you see God working in (pause and think about them now).

When you pray, praise God for them. People who have encouraged your faith, shown you love or given you hope - but don't stop there - tell them.

But we aren't just called to pray individually. we're called to pray together. As a church.

If we want to discern where God is leading us as a church, it starts with learning to pray like Paul. Not just about problems, but with thanksgiving for people. Paul not only thanks God for the progress of the Thessalonians, he intercedes for them - so that they can advance the gospel. It's for the sake of the kingdom.

Cornerstone, God is calling us to prayer. Prayer is one of Cornerstone's Core Values.

This is especially important as we seek God for what is next. What are the next major moves God would have for us when it comes to living out our vision and mission?

We are on the verge of something - but we will only know what it is as we listen - together.

On May 24, we will be having a Prayer and Re-envisioning meeting. We're inviting all of you into the process of discerning God's direction for the next chapter in our story.

Please use the QR code on the screen to RSVP. We are looking for as many people as possible to attend so that we can discern together. It's a Saturday and will take place from 9am - 1pm

We're also asking you to help us discern God's direction by filling out a survey. In a moment, Lisa from our Executive team will come out and explain the nuts and bolts of it. This is a spiritual act. Us listening together as a church. Spend time doing it as a prayer. An act of worship. Let's be thankful that we get to contribute to the mission in this way.

Closing Prayer:

Father, thank you for the people you've placed in our lives - those whose faith, love and hope reflect your grace at work. Teach us to pray with gratitude, to see others the way you see them, and to let our prayers be filled with joyful remembrance. Help us to be a thankful people, whose prayers lift up not just needs but praises for what you are already doing. In Jesus' name, Amen

May the Lord help us to pray with persistence, proximity and perspective.

Let's welcome Lisa.

Benediction and prayer ministry

-A segue into prayer ministry

-Invite prayer ministers forward

-Explain that this is a time to receive prayer from our prayer ministers, or have the option to use the space to pray quietly in their seats or to gather in a small group for prayer as well.

-Please emphasize and ask congregants to exit quietly during this time of prayer

-Please also add that those online can add their prayer requests through Cornerstone's website and our prayer team will pray for them