



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Thessalonians 1: 11-12

"Miscellaneous Topics #43 - A Prayer for 1988"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] As you can tell from the bulletin, the message of today is a New Year's Day message after New Year's Day, but it is concentrated on 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 11 and verse 12. But for the Scripture reading I want to read the twelve verses of chapter 1 of 2 Thessalonians. Some of the things that I will say in the message have to do with the earlier part of the chapter, and so this will be helpful to us, I hope. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1,

"Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. (What Paul is simply saying in effect is that the fact that they've been able to persevere and endure in the midst of the persecutions and afflictions is an evidence that

God is with them. Now the sixth verse,) For after all 't is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed-
-for our testimony to you was believed. To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, (I'd like to make one little change, "fulfill every desire for goodness" should be rendered "fulfill every resolve of goodness." In other words, the goodness is the source of the resolve or desire. Resolve is a little better than desire. "And the work of faith with power, just as the faith is the product of work, so the resolve is the product of goodness. Of course, just as faith is the gift of God, so the goodness is a gift of God.) In order that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, (That's an interesting little clause, it's not a common idea. We ordinarily think of the Lord being glorified by what has happened to us, but here we read, "And you in him.") According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege that is ours again today. We thank Thee for the apostle and for the things that Thou didst accomplish through him and the things that have come to us by the preservation of the word of God for us. And we are grateful, Lord, and we give Thee thanks today for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and for the faith that Thou hast given to us, and all of the resolves of goodness which are traceable to Thee and to Thee alone. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the

day in which we live and ask Lord that we in our day may be truly testimonies to Thy grace and to Thy working in our lives, that Jesus Christ may be honored and glorified and lifted up.

We pray for the church of Jesus Christ today and for this year. We ask, Lord, that Thou wilt bless and edify and use and if it please Thee enlarge the church and widen its testimony and outreach. We thank Thee for Believers Chapel, for its elders and deacons, and for the members and friends who are here today, and the visitors, Lord we ask a special blessing upon each of them. May Thy name be glorified in them.

And Father we would ask especially for some who have very severe trials today. We ask for Bill and Sally Philips and Billy particularly. We pray for them. We ask Thy blessing upon their needs, for transplants, for ministry from doctors, supply of needs perhaps. And for other Lord, too, who are suffering or have members of their family who are suffering or friends who are suffering and have requested our prayers. We, Lord, pray for them. We ask that Thou wilt minister to them in a way that will glorify Thy name and bring healing if it should please Thee. We pray for our country. We pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ. We pray for the outreach not simply of Believers Chapel but of other local bodies, churches of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ bless them richly Lord. And may this year be a year of advance for the body of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and may he be lifted up by the things that are accomplished this year.

And we pray Thy blessing upon our meeting as we sing, as we listen to the word of God, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] I have to be careful, new Christmas tie. [Laughter] The subject for today as we think about 1988 is "A Prayer for 1988." A natural way and I think the best way to begin the New Year is with prayer. Who could every fully underline what may be accomplished through prayer according to God's word? Someone has said, "Prayer is the golden key that can open the wicket of mercy. Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the

muscles of omnipotence." And then someone else has said, "Prayer moves the hand that moves the universe."

We learn a lot about a man from a man's prayers. We learn about his communion with the Lord. We learn about its status, its freshness, its reality. If you listen to a man pray you can tell a great deal about his spiritual life. We all know that if we've been around believers. And we can mark the differences between those who pray seldom and those who often pray and have often entered into fellowship and communion with the Lord in prayer. We learn a lot about Paul from his prayers. We learn, of course, his concerns. And they are proper concerns for us. What marvelous lessons in praying we learn from Paul's prayers. Occasionally people say, "I don't know what to pray for." One of the best answers and one of the best means of learning what to pray for is to look at the things that the apostles and others prayed about. His concerns, his inner life; and one thing that stands out in Paul is that no matter where he is writing sooner or later he will say something that is harmonious with his theology of the grace of God.

I have a good friend in the ministry. He has retired from his official position as president of a Christian institution and now engages primarily in preaching around the country. And some years ago he told me an interesting story of a man and his prayer. It seems that he was the president of an institution in Canada at the time and they had just completed a new building and they were dedicating this building, and in the community in Ontario, there was a well known public figure who was also known as a Christian man. He was an Anglican, but he was known as a Christian businessman and politician. And so when they dedicated the building this man invited the other man, whom he knew in a Christian way. They had attended some Christian meetings together. He invited this man to attend the meeting. He thought perhaps it would give them a little more acceptance in the community if this well known political figure was also on the platform. But without telling the man anything about what he might do, at a point in the service he simply turned and asked the man to lead in prayer. Well he said the man arose and he very

stumbling prayed a prayer and then sat down. Afterwards he told my friend. He said, "That's the only time in my life that I've ever been embarrassed that I was an Anglican."

Now, those of you who know Anglicanism know that generally Anglicans and Episcopalians are used to praying out of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Now the idea of personal prayer and personal intimate prayer day by day is for some, even Christian men, not their common experience. Well, you could learn a bit about that man's daily experience of the Lord by that very comment.

2 Thessalonians is an eschatological letter filled with thoughts of the future. If you were listening and pondering as we read through the Scripture reading. I say that because sometimes when people read through the Scripture reading my mind wanders. But if you were paying attention to the earlier verses the apostle speaks about, the kingdom of God. He speaks about the Second Advent of Christ. He speaks about eternal judgment. He speaks also about the glorification of believers in our Lord at the time of his advent. A number of eschatological or prophetic points the apostle mentions in the preceding verses. So this is, as we know from this chapter as well as from the next chapter which is even more eschatological in its emphasis, this is an epistle that has to do with the things that are going to happen in the future quite largely. It's true in the third chapter that he speaks about some practical matters, but they were brought upon the Thessalonians and upon the apostle by virtue of false ideas about the prophetic future.

Now, Paul's first prayer in it, which is the prayer that we want to look at, the two verses, verses 11 and 12; these verses represent a prayer that has to do with the ethical implications of the future hope. In other words, these verses that the apostle uses as a prayer represent his response to these great future events. And one notices that the thing that the apostle is interested in is the practical response to the great hopes of the future. It's sometimes forgotten, unfortunately, that when we talk about prophecy in the word of God we are not talking about that which is designed by God to satisfy our curiosity or to let us know simply what is going to be happening in the future. But the prophetic word

all through the prophetic word, in all of the great sections of the word of God, those great prophecies have as their fundamental goals and aims, the spiritual response in the daily lives of those who read or heard those prophecies.

The Thessalonians had experienced persecutions. We read that in verse 4. They were discouraged because they were confused about the prophecies that had to do with the future and the things that were happening. We learned that in the second chapter when Paul says to them that he doesn't want them to be quickly shaken from their composure or disturbed. Even individuals had evidently been sending counterfeit letters from the apostle to them disturbing the local church in Thessalonica. And then as a result of the teaching that the Lord would be coming in the future, that had produced idlers, and they were troublesome to the church, because they were in effect saying, "The Lord's going to come and we are told the Lord's going to come soon or quickly. And therefore why should we work?" And so they were living off of the others and their troublesomeness was a troublesomeness of the believers in the local church. And so the apostle was led to write just a few months after their conversion.

He had been to Thessalonica. He had been used of God for the establishment of the church. He had written them the first letter shortly after he had left Thessalonica and went to the southern part of Greece. But now he writes again just a few months after the conversion of these individuals. You might be puzzled at why the apostle should speak in the 2nd chapter about the anti-Christ and things like that when these are relatively young Christians. But that too was part of the apostle's message. And it's certainly proper to speak about the prophetic word with young Christians.

Now, what does Paul pray for them? He doesn't tell us actually, he doesn't, I should say, give us actually his prayer. He gives us a kind of prayer report. He tells us what he was praying, but he doesn't give it as a prayer. It's a report of how he prays for them. He says, for example, in verse 11, the first verse we want to consider, to this end also we pray for you always. In other words, he declares to them that they are constantly

upon his mind. Now, I want you to notice that the reason that he prays what he prays, what lies in the background is what he has just spoken about in the preceding verses, because he begins with, "To this end." Or as we might render it as it has been rendered, "With this end in view."

What end in view? Well, the coming of the Lord, the kingdom and the glory, the eternal destruction that is to come, the glorification of the saints together with him. So, with this end in view, this is a prayer in the light of this great future about which he has been speaking, a great future for the church of God, but a very destructive future and a terrible future for those, as he says, who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. So this is a prayer that is brought out by this preceding section about the kingdom of God, about his advent and judgment, and about the manifestation of the Lord in saving grace. So in the light of these things, these great events of the future, this is how Paul prays.

Now, we can describe his praying very broadly as he does in verse 11 when he says, "To this end we pray for you always." He gives thanks in the first part of the epistle, but he says, "With this end in view also we pray." So the two things, Paul says, characterize his attitude towards the Thessalonians. He gives thanks for them, a lengthy thanks, but he also prays. And he prays always. In fact, prayer goes hand in hand with the confident hope that he has just expressed in the verses that proceed. One might immediately be asking ones self a question. If the apostle is so confident that the Thessalonians have this glorious future, why does he find it necessary to pray that they might realize this future?

For example, in the first letter in chapter 2, in verse 12 we read, "So that ye may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory." That's an expression of confidence that they are going to be called into the kingdom and glory, or the glorious kingdom of our Lord. And in the 5th verse of this epistle he has said this is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering." And if there is any

doubt at all of this being an affirmation of confidence, at the conclusion of the first letter he had written to them in the 24th verse of the last chapter, "Faithful is he who calls you, and he also will bring it to pass." So he says without question he who calls will bring what he has called us to, to pass. And yet now he prays.

Well, in a moment I want to say something about that. But you can see if you regard this as attention as some do, there is no reason for us to doubt the apostle's confidence and also to doubt the fact that confidence goes hand in hand with prayer that that for which we have confidence will come to pass. In the apostolic understanding of things there is no problem with that at all.

But let's look secondly at the content of the prayer. He says, "To this end we also pray for you always." And by the way, when Paul says he prays for them always, I gather that that means what he says in other places where he says that we are to pray without ceasing. That is intermittently the apostle had to carry on ordinary life such as you and I do, but it was bathed in prayer and prayer was that that he intermittently engaged in. It's winter time and some of you I hear coughing, and that's not surprising. If you go to a land like Scotland everybody seems to be coughing in January and February, and the Scots have never understood this. I've never thought of them as being hardheaded, but they frequently go out when, this would be like summer weather to them and they throw a scarf around their neck and you see them walking down the street with the scarf flying in the air and then they're all coughing and having bronchial disturbances throughout the whole of the winter. Well, I'm leading up to the fact that this Greek word translated "without ceasing" was a word that was used of an individual who had a constant cough. He coughed intermittently. And so the apostle when he speaks about prayer and praying without ceasing, he doesn't mean that you have to follow one prayer immediately by another, but it's just like a hacking cough that you may have. So he says he prays always for them. But he says in the other letters that he prays always for those other churches, too. So Paul was surely a man of constant prayer. That reveals a great deal about the

apostle's life, his fellowship with God, his concerns, the things that really moved him, and the things, of course, that ought to move us.

But what does he specifically pray for the Thessalonians? Well, first of all Paul has left out one thing that he should have said, of course, that their free will will hold out to the end. But he doesn't say anything about that. I have a friend; he's a professor in a theological institution not in this city, although I think he has some disciples in this city. But he likes to react very negatively to the doctrine of the grace of God and particularly the efficacious grace of God by saying that "If we really believe that God moved into a man's heart and brings him to faith in God efficaciously that would be the rape of his soul, and therefore it cannot be true." Efficacious grace is God's rape of the soul.

Now, my Christian friend, if you are a genuine Christian, what's one of the greatest experiences that you ever have? Why, it's to get down upon your knee by your bedside and to lift your voice in prayer to God for yourself, for your family, for your friends, for the church of Christ. And what are you asking? Well, I don't imagine that you're asking the Lord God anything other than, "Lord, bring it to pass that my friend, Bill or John or Mary or whoever it may be may be brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." Or "Bless the church of Jesus Christ, move in our midst." Or "Lord if it be within Thy will, give healing mercies to the doctors who minister to so and so, and may she or he be healed." Is that the rape of a soul? Is it the rape of a soul when God, in answer to prayer, transforms an individual and brings them out of darkness and into the marvelous light that is in Christ? Think about it for a moment. There can be no Christianity at all if we have no sovereign God who is able to accomplish his will and not be guilty of the rape of a soul. How foolish, and you can see that under girding the Apostle Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians is the conviction that a sovereign God is perfectly within his rights to transform the heart of an individual by his marvelous grace, to bring them to something that can be called the greatest blessing that could ever come to a human soul, the knowledge of the true God.

So what does he pray for first of all? He prays that the Thessalonians may be declared worth of their divine calling. Declared worth, now what does that mean other than they are effectively, well first of all let me explain calling. When we say they are calling, that could be rendered simply calling, or it could be rendered your calling, supplying the personal pronoun. All that Paul says is that "God may count you worthy of the calling." He's talking about the effective act of God of bringing men and women from darkness to light and to faith in him. That's our calling, and strikingly the Apostle Paul whenever he uses the word call speaks of an effectual call. It's not an invitation out of which we may respond out of our free will and thus take credit for part of our salvation. This is an effectual call. It always accomplishes its purpose. So it's the same thing that Paul is speaking about in Romans chapter 8 when he says in verse 29 and 30, "For whom he foreknew he also predestinated to become conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the first born among many brethren. And whom he predestined these he also called." In other words, everyone who is predestined is also called. And further, "And whom he called these he also justified." Every one who is called is also justified. And to make it certain that this is an eternal calling in its results he says, "And whom he justified, these he also, " in fact, Paul to make it so certain, he doesn't even say will justify he says, "He also glorified." So from beginning to end not a one is lost whom he predestinated, these he called. Whom he called, these he justified. And whom he justified, these he glorified. Who's been lost in the process? Not a single individual. Every single one from predestination through the glorification is the object of the sovereign power and authority of God and his purposes are realized.

Now Paul, when he says, "He prays that God may count them worth of their calling," at first glance you might think of course they're worthy of their calling by virtue of what God has done to them and for them. But it's perfectly within the apostle's theological thinking for him to pray that God would count them worthy of the calling. What he's effectively saying is he wants their lives to conform to the great theological

truth that has reached its fruition in their lives. In other words, he wants us, as he tells the Ephesians, to walk worthily of the calling by which we have been called. We who have been called are called to walk worthily of that calling. And so Paul's not questioning at all the certainty of our calling, but he would like to see the evidence of it in the lives of believers. And you can be sure of this, that the evidence of that in the lives of true believers will be there. I may not see it, but God in his sovereign ability to see what we cannot see will see it, because he's the one who brings it to pass.

Paul is the classic case. He talks in Galatians about how God called him and saved him by his grace. We won't have time to take a look at that, but you may want to look it up. That's the first thing that he prays, that they might be declared worthy of the divine calling, may be recognized as such.

Secondly he prays for the realization of the divine purpose in an ethical way, that is in a practical way, in a spiritual life way. Listen to what he says, "And fulfill every resolve of goodness and the work of faith with power." Now, I'm taking this goodness to come from men, the reason being is that it's parallel with the work of faith, for faith is what men exercise. Goodness is parallel with it. It's the goodness that we exercise. But now, another reason that I take it that way is that this word goodness is never used of God in the New Testament. But you might ask the question "Is this something that arises in me?" Well, of course not. No goodness can arise in me, that is make its inception in me. There's no way in which I as a lost individual can produce a good work acceptable to God, apart from God's enabling grace. The Scriptures from the beginning of the Bible to the end make plain the fact of man's inability to please God. As I've often cited, "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God. It's not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." C-A-N can be. So we cannot please God. Faith pleases God. Faith, therefore, doesn't come from me. It comes from God. The whole Christian church in its orthodoxy down through the centuries affirmed that doctrine from the days of Augustine, through the Reformers, on down into the relatively recent past. But about a century ago

or so things began to change, and what was orthodox for so many countless generations is now a strange thing to a lot of people. Hopefully it's not strange to some of you in Believers Chapel.

So he prays that God would fulfill every desire or resolve of goodness and work of faith with power, powerfully fulfill it in the lives of the Thessalonians. They would need it. They were persecuted. Their lives were at stake. They had difficulties within and without. And this was a great encouragement for them, that God would fulfill all of their resolves to please him and all of their activities of faith that they were engaged in in difficult times. So fulfill suggests that no resolve from the Spirit or faith created work is to be left unfulfilled. No doubt about this. The fifth verse says they're already suffering for the kingdom of God. So faith is to cloth itself in good works. In fact, when Paul says, "Work of faith," he means work produced by faith. Faith then is not simply pious thinking. Some people seem to think we have faith if we just piously think about spiritual things, but never accomplish any work for the Lord. No, the Scriptures make it very plain that faith works, "Faith," as someone has put it, "is always busy." He's not talking about pious thinking. He's not talking about human reformation. He's talking about resolutions that issue in work. I won't dignify Paul's language by talking about your resolutions, some of which you probably have already broken. But he's talking about something more fundamental than the kinds we make. I'm going to give up eating fruit cake for 1988, that is at least until the Christmas season of 1988, and things like that. He's interested in something more significant.

Now, I've led up to this because I think people sometimes have difficulty with this. Here is the apostle telling us that they have a certain calling to be that will surely find its ultimate conclusion in their experience of the kingdom and glory of the Lord God. And yet at the same time he's praying that they may be accounted worth of that. Well, we know if we read the Bible much, that for the apostles prayer is a means to an end, and perfectly harmonious with the solid affirmations of the certainty of the fulfillment of

the will of God. "In the chain of salvation," which someone has said, "which connects one eternity with another, constant prayer and daily sanctification are indispensable links." So we are confident of our future, but we are called upon by God to pray with reference to it, and we do those things. In fact, it's the natural experience of the new life to want to pray, to give thanks, not simply to ask for things, but to give thanks, to enjoy communion, to go to our favorite place of prayer, by a chair, by your bedside or wherever it may be, your close to speak in our Lord's terms, and there have communion with the Lord. That's a natural experience of a born again person. That's the way in which Ananias was told he could see and recognize the Apostle Paul. He said, "Behold," the angel told him, "Behold he prayeth." Here's a man who spent all of his time kneeling in public, offering up petitions supposedly to the Lord God, and now for the first time in his life, and now for the first time Paul the Pharisee is praying, truly praying the holy prayer.

That's the natural response of the man who knows the Lord, to get down upon his knees and pray. Do you have that desire? Is it part of your feeling constantly? I want to get down upon my knees and pour out my soul to the Lord God. That's the natural response of a Christian man. So the apostle is speaking to people who were in danger of being deluded by false teachers. That's one of the ways by which we are delivered by delusions that others would seek to impose upon our minds. It's possible, you know, even in our sound theological institutions, it's occasionally necessary for the administration to say to its faculty members, "Your views are not Christian as we understand them, and we're sorry that we have to drop you from our faculty." Those things do happen and should happen, because delusions are things to which all of us should be subjected.

Leon Morris, in one of his two commentaries on these epistles has commented on the fact that what Paul is praying is very much like the collect for Easter day in the Anglican Church. That shows you I don't really have anything against the Anglicans. This is the way the prayer reads, "We humbly beseech Thee, that as by Thy special grace

preventing us," that's an Old English term that means preceding us, going before us, efficacious grace is what it is. Grace that precedes us. "Thou dost put into our minds good desires." The Lord putting into their mind good desires so that "by Thy continual help," that the Lord continually working, "we may bring the same to good effect." In other words, the Lord putting into our minds things that are pleasing to him and then helping us along the way so that they come to their proper conclusion.

Why is that necessary? Because in the mean time you have fellowship with the Lord God. That's why he wants us to pray. That's why he doesn't mark out everything before us and say it's there and you'll be there and live as you please in the mean time, but it's certain to come. No, our salvation is for now, and the communion we enjoy with the Lord day by day, as well as those great blessings in the future. And you notice that what the apostle is saying is he said, "I want God to count you worthy of your calling." That's in the past. And now he's talking about fulfilling in the present all of those resolves of goodness and the works of faith that he hopes that we will do. In a moment he will talk about being glorified with him in his second coming. It's as if Paul is ascribing the grace of God, as Johnnie Calvin says, "Not merely to the beginning of our salvation, but to all departments of it from beginning to end." It's God's gracious activity in our hearts.

Now, sometimes preachers have to say things that are very difficult to say. Believers Chapel, God has blessed us greatly. We look over the past years, and we have had our ups and downs, but God has preserved us from any upheavals. And we are thankful to God for that. We are thankful for the people who write in and say "We found the Lord in Believers Chapel," or through its ministries. But no matter how God may have blessed a body of believers, the tendency of the body of believers is to depart from the Lord. Israel illustrates it. The letters that our Lord had to write to the church at Ephesus saying that the apostle was so close forty years later after praising them for the love that they had for God and for all the saints, Jesus said, "You've left your first love."

We had a prayer meeting this past Wednesday night in Believers Chapel, a called prayer meeting by the elders. To me that means you better be there, if the elders, our overseers call us to prayer, then that's a very important thing for us, it seems to me. You know, I don't have anything really against occasionally helping para-church activities, but let me say this to you. You can read the word of God from beginning to end and you won't find para-church activities, para-church works. I don't say that that's impossible for us. I confess to not only have worked with para-church activities. I still do, and I give financially to them, but it's a question of priority. In the New Testament the priority is the church of Jesus Christ. The church is upon the apostle's heart and mind, not para-church activities, though I have no reason to doubt that he might have approved of a number of them. So, we were called to a prayer meeting. I won't tell you how many were there. It's embarrassing. It's embarrassing for the elders. I felt embarrassed, too. It's a reflection upon the ministry of the chapel, yes, but more it's a reflection on our Lord himself.

I remember when I was at theological seminary and Dr. Chafer gave us a little lecture one day in theology class because a well known Bible teacher happened to be in town suddenly, to whom Dr. Chafer had praised the institution. And he invited this well known Bible teacher to address the chapel hour, and to this day I thank God that I was present at that chapel. But in that chapel in those days about eighty would have filled it up; there may have been fifteen students present. The very next hour was theology under Dr. Chafer. And I can remember him putting aside his notes and saying to us, "Men, I was very embarrassed today. Brother so and so, or Dr. so and so" it was, "I have through the years in Bible conferences told him about the work of God in Dallas Theological Seminary, praised it. He rejoiced in what I was telling him. And so when he comes our students are absent from chapel, the one place that reflects the spiritual life of the body, fifteen students." I guess that's evangelistic numbers. So I won't say anything more about it. I'm going to read you a little something I ran across this week. It's about Missus Prayer Meeting.

"Missus Prayer Meeting died recently at the First Neglected Church in World Avenue. Born many years ago in the midst of great revival, she was a strong health child fed largely on testimony and spiritual holiness, soon growing into worldwide prominence, and was one of the most influential members of the famous first church. For the past several years Sister Prayer Meeting had been in failing health gradually wasting away. Her death was caused through lukewarmness and coldness of heart, lack of spiritual food, coupled with lack of faith, shameless desertion and non-support were contributing causes of her death. Only a few were present at her last rites, sobbing over memories of her past beauty and power. Carefully selected pall bearers were asked to bear the remains tenderly away, but failed to appear. The body rests in the beautiful cemetery of Bygone Glories," that's the name of the cemetery Bygone Glories, "awaiting the summons from above."

Now, those of you who were here Wednesday night don't feel proud. You may have been here accidentally like I was in that chapel meeting when Dr. Chafer had his well known Bible teacher there. But my Christian friends, my brothers and my sisters in Christ, if prayer is not a vital part of our life we're not really living the Christian life. We may talk about meetings in which we have attended, which we have received ministry, and how we've been blessed, and how we've been blessed in this and that and the other. But if we're not praying in response to the truth of God, we are not what we set ourselves forth to be.

Now, Paul must talk about the ultimate purpose of the letter, because it's twelve o'clock almost. So I want to say just a word or two about verse 12. Here it's obvious. He calls us back to the chief end of our whole life, which is the promotion of the glory of God. "In order that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and you in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ." It's two-fold goal, the name. That means the whole character of a person. "That the name of the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and you in him." To put it simply, Christ glorified in his

people at his second coming, because we shall in our deliverance and the glory of our salvation exhibit him as truly the Lord and Lords and King of Kings. Then men will truly see in us the evidence that he is the Lord God, Yahweh of the Old Testament, but not only that, we shall be glorified in him. United to him, presented perfect in him. We are glorious in him at his Second Advent.

As one of the old Scottish interpreters have said, "His the glory of Savior, theirs the glory of being saved in him and of being with him forever." And it's not unlike the apostle to finish with a note on the fundamental principle of everything that he said. I'm not surprised. He began this letter by saying, "Grace to you and peace from God the Father." He closes the first chapter by saying, "According to," it's all according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The joyous free favor of God to us, the Father the source of that future salvation and of our present life, and the fountain of it, and the Son the mediator of it by his saving work on Calvary's cross. If you notice, he doesn't say according to the free will granted us by our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. How foolish that would be. So Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians then is an admirable and fitting one for us as we begin a new year, 1988; that we be worth of our calling, that God fulfill powerfully every resolve of goodness and the work of faith in us, that the Lord's name be glorified in us and we in him by grace.

I must say something that is more pleasant. Every now and then I get letters of the congregation for various reasons. Suffering in the family, concerns that they have, and then every now and then a letter in which an individual has made a spiritual decision that's a blessing. And I got one about two weeks ago, maybe not quite that long ago. It was a letter written to this effect. "I have known the Lord. He has been my Savior." I know that they have ministered to the chapel. I was told this afterwards, after I got the letter. But he said, "I want to make the Lord the partner in my business." Nice, pious expression of faith, but he included the work with it, a very generous check and asked us to give it to someone or some work that was a needy work. That was an encouragement,

God working in the heart of one of us to make a decision, and then by God's grace to live by it.

So the division provision in the past, the present, and the future is highlighted by the apostle in this petition. As George Finley says, "That Christ should find his glory in men, and share his glory with them is the greatest conceivable favor." How true that is. How blessed we are. If you're here today, and you've never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ we remind you of the grace manifested in the saving work on Calvary's cross. We invite you, if God has spoken to your heart and has revealed to you your sin and your need of deliverance from this everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, from which Paul has been speaking. As an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ we invite you to speak to the Lord about it, to confess your sin, to confess your need, to acknowledge the Lord as one who has died for sinners. And then in an act of faith to commit yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ. May God in his grace touch your heart to that end. May 1988 be a greater spiritual experience for all of us, and may it be a year in which we pray, and pray fervently, and effectively, and demonstrate in measure at least that we're worthy of the great calling that God has given us in Christ. That's my prayer for me and for you. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for all of the blessings of life, to think that we should be identified with the Thessalonians as those who have named the name of Christ, the recipients of divine blessing from a sovereign Lord is almost too much...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]