

Dependence: not highly valued quality: but as Paul wraps up this letter he wraps it up in prayer: v1, 2 & 5.

Was dependent **on God**. See 1:3, 1:11 & 12, 2:13, 3:16 & 18. Soaks his everything in prayer. Strength of the church is ONLY in God.

His dependence **was mutual**: v1 'pray for us.. pray that we'. Church is not a collection of superheroes: a collection of dependent people who rely on God & support each other. 3 things here Paul especially depended on God for.

1. For The Spread Of The Message v1

Pray for us that 'the message of the Lord (the word of the Lord) may run & be glorified'. Passion about advance of message about Jesus. What makes church different to golf club, political organisation, the social group? We have 'the word of the Lord'.

It does not belong to us.

It has power.

It is the gospel of salvation.

Given to us to go from us. Paul prays this word of the Lord 'may spread rapidly'.

Also may it be honoured: received as wonderful, something that you drop everything else to attend to.

Only God can do this. See 2 Cor 4:4.

It needs to run into our hearts first and be glorified by us. How on earth will gospel run from us if our souls are in love with sport, careers, holidays & not with Jesus?

2. For the Protection Of God's people v2-3

The church is under attack. Do you see it? If you do, you'll pray.

Danger

1) **Wicked & evil men**: Satan uses people to attack the church. Paul himself had tried 'to destroy the church'. Acts 8:3. He was hated and pursued. The Thessalonians also faced bitter hostility: see 1 Thess 1:6, 2:14-15 and 2 Thess 1:4. All over world Satan uses human agents to attack Christians. These men are v2 'wicked & evil men'. 'Wicked' is out of place: this is God's world & they are fighting him. They are 'evil' not because they are so horrible, but they are serving an evil cause.

2) **The Evil One**. Satan is on the move through deceptions, divisions, persecutions, defilements & apathy. Many weapons, one strategy: to destroy the church of Jesus Christ. See 2:9-10. What can we do?

Confidence

Paul confident that prayer makes the difference. 'Pray that we may be delivered' v2, because v3 the Lord is faithful & he will strengthen & protect you from the evil one'. God is greater. To 'strengthen' is to fix securely, like a building with deep foundations. To 'protect' is to guard you every day. Pray for protection from God, for then you are truly safe.

3. For The Direction Of Our Hearts v4-5

Paul speaks with great confidence about the Thessalonians' obedience v4. But then he prays for their hearts, not for activities & events, but for the inner disposition & direction of their souls. Every day we need God to take charge of our hearts like a sailor who takes the tiller in hand & sets the direction of the boat.

1) **Into God's love**: You can have a heart directed into many good things, yet your heart can lose its savour of God's love. We need our hearts taken back & back & back to the love of God. Eph 3:17-19 'I pray that you may have the power to grasp how wide & long & high & deep is the love of Christ & to know this love'. This love of God not just for me but for others: a love from him to flow through me. A love I don't have but He can give me. The love that goes on loving because God does. The love that binds a church together. When we love God, he fills our horizon. He is great in our eyes.

2) **Into Christ's perseverance**: The last words of Jesus on earth was 'It is finished'. Triumphant cry of the one who persevered to the end. Churches that last only last because people in them have had hearts directed onto Christ's perseverance. See Heb 12:2-3.

Gospel advance, divine protection, hearts directed by God: these 3 things will count for eternity. May they be focus of our prayers & the marks of this church.

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