

II Thessalonians 3:16-18 How to Pray

Alright, we are attempting to finish up II Thessalonians chapter 3. In fact, this could be the last study in II Thessalonians. II Thessalonians chapter 3 verses 16 to 18 part 3. Chapter 3 is The Instructions Concerning their Testimony.

We saw in verses 1 to 5 The Confidence of Paul. That the Lord will deliver you, the Lord will be with you. In verses 6 through 15, The Conduct of the Believers as he laid out some commands. In II Thessalonians chapter 3 verse 16 that we have been in for two weeks - this is our third week - Concerning Peace. **Now may the Lord of peace Himself give peace to you through everything in every way. The Lord is with you all** (or *with all of you*). We have seen two things so far. We have seen about peace, first of all the definition of *peace*. εἰρήνη (eirēnē), the Greek word, it means to be united or to be at one with someone or something. Two things about peace we have studied so far; one is the concept of peace; and secondly the condition of peace, we took last week.

The concept of peace is that the peace that Jesus gives is not the same peace that the world talks about. Jesus even said that in John chapter 14 verse 27. Secondly, look at His titles, Jesus' titles in verse 16. Jesus is the Lord of Peace. We saw from Isaiah chapter 9 verse 6 that He is called the Prince of Peace. Lord of peace and He is the Prince of peace. Thirdly, we saw in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 14, He Himself is our peace. He is the one that we are looking to be at one with, looking to unify. So He is called the Lord of Peace and the Prince of Peace, and secondly He Himself is our peace.

Secondly, last week we saw the condition of peace. There are two kinds of conditions. First of all, it tells us in Romans chapter 8 verses 7 and 8, and James chapter 4 verse 4 that before I received Christ the Scripture tells me that I was at enmity toward God. *Enmity* means *hostility*. We saw in those verses that the mind of the flesh, the natural mind in our human frame, is hostile towards God. It loves the things in the world, which James says, "You are establishing yourself as the enemy of God." But the moment that I receive Christ, I became at peace with God. See, salvation is a surrender. So I surrender myself, I no longer want to fight against the Lord. I want the Lord to come into my life and take over so that I belong to Him. And so I have made peace with God by receiving Christ into my spirit. Romans chapter 5 verse 1 says, **Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Second, there is a difference in the Bible between having the peace with God and experiencing the peace of God. This is conditional. Having peace with God by receiving Christ, that is positional and it never changes. I might be the Lord's wild child, but I will always belong to Him and He will always discipline me. I am His forever. It never changes. But to experience the peace of God is something totally different. That is conditional.

We saw this from Philippians chapter 4 verses 1 through 7. And if you have your supplemental pages that came with your study guide, you can follow along this important chapter.

Philippians chapter 4 verses 1 to 7. **So then, my beloved and longed for brothers, my joy and crown, so stand firm in *the* Lord, beloved.** (verse 2) **I encourage Euodias, and I encourage Syntyche, to think the same thing in *the* Lord.** Some English texts say *have the same mind in the Lord*. It is literally, *to think the same thing in the Lord*. That is have the same frame of mind, not the same thoughts, but the frame of mind is in the Lord. Frame of mind runs to and flows towards the Lord. It is what the Lord wants. What the Lord wants should be the primary and only goal of every believer.

He goes on to say in Philippians chapter 4 verse 3, **And I ask you also, true companions, assist them who struggle together with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names *are in the* book of life.** So these are two women not getting along in the church in Philippi. He said, **They struggled with me together for the Gospel**, and, **these women whose names are in the book of life**, they are saved. They are Christians, but they are not getting along.

So then he lays out three principles that we studied last week, all in command form. Philippians chapter 4 verse 4 is the first principle, **Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I will say, Rejoice.** The word *rejoice* in Greek does not have to do with a happy feeling. *Rejoice* has to do with *satisfaction*. So he is saying, **Be satisfied at all times with the Lord and again I will say be satisfied.** If you are satisfied with Him, and what He wants, and what He does then you will be at peace.

Principle number two in Philippians chapter 4 verse 5, again a command. **Let your moderation be known to all men. The Lord is near.** Let yourself be known as handling the world and using the world in moderation, not excessively, not obsessively. Are you known for being a moderate person, or a self-indulgent person?

Principle number three, Philippians chapter 4 verse 6, **Do not be anxious about one thing, but in everything *by* prayer and supplication**, which means *petition*, **with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.** So he says, *do not be anxious*. That is our word that we have studied many times before, **μεριμνά** (*merimna*), which describes the distraction of the mind to the point that the attention is occupied with thoughts other than Christ. So what are we to do with the things that bombard us all during the week that occupy the attention of our minds? We know we live in a broken world. There are broken people all around us, broken society all around us. It can wear on you. He says, **Do not be anxious, but rather through prayer and petition let your requests be made known to God.**

The result of all this, Philippians chapter 4 verse 7. **And the peace of God, the one surpassing all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.** So you do these three things, and you will experience the peace of God. We have peace with God when we receive Christ, but we don't always experience the peace of God.

Let us go back to verse 6 of Philippians chapter 4. **Do not be anxious about one thing, but in everything *by* prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.** Through prayer give to the Lord your anxieties. Whatever you are anxious about, give it to Him.

So now the question is, how are we supposed to pray? How do we pray? And how do we pray to get the Lord answer the prayer? Many people think the Lord just does not answer.

Let us turn to the premier section on prayer in the Bible. The summation of I John chapter 5 verses 14 and 15. I say *the premier teaching on prayer* because all the other teachings have been taught before this. John presents everything in summary. These are two basic facts and their conditions. There is a condition with each one. In fact, the condition starts off the verse. **And this is the confidence, verse 14, which we have toward Him, that if we should ask anything according to His will, He is hearing us.** Notice the factual statement: **He is.** Not *should* or *might*, **He is hearing us.** So if we ask anything according to His will, He hears every prayer. The Lord is answering every prayer that is prayed according to His will, for things to be according to His will.

This began, was set up for us in principle by Jesus in Matthew chapter 6 verses 6 through 15, where Jesus gave the disciples what we call The Lord's Prayer, but in reality it is The Disciples' Prayer, when He said, "Pray like this." **Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed (or sanctified) be Your name. Let Your kingdom come, let Your will be done, upon earth as it is in heaven.** So when I ask for His will to be done - that is a good prayer to pray in the morning and ask for the daily necessities, in Matthew chapter 6 verses 6 through 15, and for the forgiveness of sins. So this creates a whole slew of questions concerning praying according to the Lord's will.

The first one is, is that all we can pray? Just pray for something and say, "Let it be done according to Your will," for everything? That is the simple, shortcut way. He wants to hear our heart's desire. He wants to hear what is going on in our lives, especially in our minds, the things that we are caught up in, but we still pray for His will to be done.

In Luke chapter 22 verse 42, it is recorded for us that when Jesus was in the garden with the disciples that He prayed concerning the suffering which is about to come upon Him on the cross. He said, **Father, if it is Your will let this cup pass from Me.** It is the cup of suffering. **Let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.** You see, Jesus poured out the anguish that He was experiencing to the Father. That if there is any other way to provide a sacrifice for the sins of the people, it might be in Your counsel that we do that. **Nevertheless not my will, but Yours be done.** Prayer to the Lord always ends not with just the saying of the words, but the asking for the Lord's will to be done. Be satisfied with the Lord at all times. So if we are satisfied with Him, we want Him to be satisfied in our lives.

Next question, how do I know what the Lord's will is, in order to pray for His will to be done? It is a common question. That is the whole point. When you ask for the Lord's will to be done, you are turning the situation over to Him. It is by faith. I do not always know what the Lord's will is, but I know He has a will and He has a way. So when I pray - in fact, most of the time when I pray, especially about future things, or the things of tomorrow, maybe even some things of today, I do not know what the Lord wants done. I just pray the Lord go before me. and function. and bring about His will. That is faith. Faith is letting go. You do not have to specifically detail to the Lord what His will is. Some people think that you have to come before

the Lord and tell Him what His will is so that He will do it. And that is the whole problem that we have with false teaching.

Let me tell you this, every false teaching will put power and control into the hands of the believer to control and manipulate according to his or her will. We use phrases like *In the name of Jesus* as a magic formula for things to be done. After all Jesus said, **If you ask anything in My name I will do it**, in John 14 and John 15. Two times. Two places. But we do not see that happening when it is used as a magic formula to make things happen, to make things go our way, to bring relief for the flesh. That is not what prayer is for.

The next question we always get, why does not the Lord answer my prayers? Because you are not praying for things to be done according to His will. You are not giving the situation over to Him for Him to work out the way He wants to. He is always answering prayer. He answers every prayer when we ask for His will to be done.

And then the last question for this verse. How often should I pray about a situation? How often should I pray this prayer? Until you are confident it is in the Lord's hands. Sometimes I only have to pray once, just give it to the Lord, let Him take care of it. If I feel like I am taking it back and becoming obsessive with it, and I am anxious over it - that is, it occupies the attention of my mind - then I have got to go back to the Lord in prayer. Sometimes we have to pray every day, maybe a couple times a day, until we give it over to the Lord for Him to work out His will.

Then we have the second fact in I John chapter 5 verse 15, **And we know that He is hearing us, that is, whatever we should ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.** So once you are certain the Lord has heard your prayer because you have asked for His will to be done, once you are confident the Lord has heard your prayer for His will to be done and it is in His hands, then we know that we have the requests. We have the requests which we have asked from Him. Again, present tense, whatever is, is the Lord's answer.

This is the reason why some people will not go by the teachings of prayer in the Bible because we cannot accept the answer to the prayer. When I asked for His will to be done and it just does not work out the way I want it to, and I just cannot accept that the Lord would have it be a certain way. It cannot be that way. Sometimes when we pray for something and asked for the Lord's will to be done things get worse and harder. Whatever is, we have the answer. And the Lord gives us the power to sustain us in His answer.

So people cannot accept it, so they take prayer into their own hands to control the situation to turn out the way they want it answered. That is the false teaching of today. It really became prevalent about twenty or thirty years ago, putting control into the people. "The reason the situation got worse when you pray for the Lord's will to be done is because you need to take charge, and in Jesus' name you need to request what you want done." Cannot accept a negative coming from God but that is false teaching. It is not in our control, specifically given to us in these texts.

So the definition of prayer is to express my submission to the Lord for His will to be done. To express my submission to the Lord for His will to be done. It is a submissive act on my part to turn the situation over Him. When I am submitted to the Lord and His will in my circumstances, I will experience the peace of God. I will be at one with Christ. When I am lined up with Jesus, I will experience His peace.

Back to II Thessalonians, as we finish up the last two verses. Verse 16, **Now may the Lord of peace Himself give peace to you through everything in every way.** Now, notice that statement at the end of verse 16, **The Lord is with all of you.** Some English translations, in fact most English translations, instead of saying *is with you* says *may the Lord be with you*, it is a wish, they make it into a wish. But in the Greek it is a factual statement. So we put in italics the word *is*: **The Lord is with all of you.**

In verses 17 and 18, the postlude of Paul. Concerning Paul's greetings he says, **The greeting of Paul with my hand, which is a sign in every letter; so I write.** So Paul dictated his letter, but then he signed it to authenticate the letter as being from him. So, all of his letters have his signature on them. Then verse 18, **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with all of you.** Notice *is* is in italics. It is expressing the factual statement of the Greek text. Not *be*: the grace of the Lord be with you all, **The grace of the Lord is with all of you.** And then he closes with the word **Amen**, which means *so be it*.

So the message to us is God wants us to experience His peace by receiving Christ. And then Satan comes and he scouts us. According to Job chapter 1, he scouts us to see the things that will get us distracted, and occupied, and make it wear us down. And we pray for help from God, but it does not seem like He answers. The Lord wants us to let go and give it to Him. Let Him work out His will in His way. And we have to accept that after we pray for the Lord's will to be done, that whatever is, we have the answer to the prayer. And by faith and trust we have to accept that.

Let's close with prayer.