



PRAYING FOR THE CHURCH IS POWERFUL

Acts 17:1-9

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Good morning church! I say that with joy, but I also say that with conviction because I love being here with you but I am also aware of the task that God has given me is to equip you to live for Christ and also to die for Christ.

“May I suggest to pastors that in the quietness of your study you do this? Imagine that America collapses. First anarchy, then tyranny - from the right or the left. Imagine that religious freedom is gone. What remains for Christians is fines, prison, exile, and martyrdom. Then ask yourself this: Has my preaching been developing real, radical Christians? Christians who can sing on the scaffold, ‘Let good and kindred go, this mortal life also; the body they may kill: God’s truth abideth still; His kingdom is forever.’ Christ who will act like the believers in Hebrews 10:34, “You joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.” Christians who will face hate and reviling and exclusion for Christ’s sake and yet “rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, [their] reward is great in heaven (Luke 6:22-23).” — ***Policies, Persons, and Paths to Ruin***
Article by John Piper

Does my prayer really matter? Why should I pray? What should I pray? What are some biblical models of prayer? Today, I want us to gain understanding about the practice of prayer from the Apostle Paul as he writes to persecuted Christians in the city of Thessalonica. Let’s look briefly at Paul’s encounter in Thessalonica to better understand prayer and understand persecution.

Acts 17:1-9

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. **2** And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, **3** explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” **4** And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. **5** But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. **6** And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, **7** and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the

decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." **8** And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. **9** And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

1. CHRISTIAN FAITH — results in the ACTION of a bold and faithful witness of Christ. (v 3-4)

2. A PERSECUTOR — individual or group OPPOSED to the witness of Christ and His message. (v 5)

3. ATTACK — Opposition that intends to SILENCE the witness. (v 5-9)

"There were two kinds of Christians: those who sincerely believe in God and those who, just as sincerely, believe that they believe. You can tell them apart by their actions in decisive moments." — **Richard Wurmbbrand quoting Girolamo Savonarola**

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

"Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ."

Delivered — God may choose to answer the prayer of deliverance in one of several ways, and each answer can be the will of God:

- a. That those imprisoned by wicked and evil captors will be released from captivity. So, may we pray that their release advances the gospel.
- b. That those imprisoned by wicked and evil captors will be delivered from the torture and anguish of prison to a joy in God's current assignment. So, may we pray that their joy advances the gospel.
- c. That those imprisoned may be delivered to their heavenly reward, passing from this life, as they faithfully endured the oppression of wicked and evil captors to the end. So, may we pray that their deaths glorify God and lead many to faith, and may we pray that the God of all comfort will comfort their families.

Are we ready to live for Christ and are we ready to die for Christ today?

• **Pray for God's PRESENCE. (v. 2)**

"O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy." **Habakkuk 3:2**

• **Rest in God's SALVATION. (v. 3:13)**

*"You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck." **Habakkuk 3:13***

- Rejoice in PERSECUTION. (v. 3:17-19)

"Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord: I will take joy in the God of my salvation. 19 God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places."

It is our privilege to stand with them by lifting their needs to the throne of grace. Paul's prayer helps us know how and what to pray.