

STEADFAST CHRISTIANITY

A STUDY OF 2 THESSALONIANS

STUDY THREE

Praying for Others: A Must

2 Thessalonians 1:11–12

Prayer is as much a part of the Christian life as breathing is to the physical life.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

PERHAPS you've heard of or experienced a similar scenario.

It's 11:00 p.m. and you've drifted into deep slumber. Your cellphone suddenly and annoyingly buzzes atop your bedside nightstand. It's your sister, who lives in the neighboring state. You pick up the phone. "Hey, I'm so sorry for the late call. But we're heartbroken, scared, and angry. Tom lost his job today. He was just outright fired! They've been harassing and bullying him, telling him he can't read his Bible over his lunch break. He's their lead engineer. We can't afford this! What do we do?"

What's your instinctive response? Feeling angry over the brazen injustice? Scheming about how to get even through a justifiable lawsuit? Jumping in the car and driving to your sister's house to generate a game plan? None of those options sound right. So what do you do?

It's understandable that we want to physically act. Praying doesn't feel as tangible. But prayer, in fact, is the best first step we can take because it calls on God to get involved in a special way. So prayer is our first priority and our most powerful way of helping. Rather than the last resort, prayer is our greatest privilege. By praying, we actively participate in what God is doing to bring about His will in the situation. What a gift!

In the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, Paul gives us a glimpse into his prayer life. We gaze into the heart of this follower of Christ who, above all else, modeled for us the invaluable and indispensable role of prayer.



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The Bible-Teaching Ministry of Chuck Swindoll
Study 3 • Page 1

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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2 Thessalonians 1:11–12



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Prayer was Jesus' top priority. He often “withdrew to the wilderness for prayer” (Luke 5:16). Even now, at His place of honor at the right hand of the Father in heaven, Jesus “lives forever to intercede with God on [our] behalf” (Hebrews 7:25).

In the space below, write down your prayer as you invite the Lord to align your heart with His.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

While Paul ministered in Corinth, his beloved Thessalonian friends were living in the winepress of persecution. He ached for them, and, as he wrote 2 Thessalonians, he poured his soul into the opening lines. He gave thanks for their flourishing faith and love (2 Thessalonians 1:3). He affirmed them for their resilient perseverance (1:4). He reassured them of God's righteous justice (1:7–9). And he encouraged them in the hope of the Lord's glorious return (1:10).

Then, as naturally as breathing, he prayed. “We keep on praying for you,” he wrote (1:11). *Always*—throughout the day, every day, Paul interceded for others. Constancy is the first quality we notice in Paul's prayer life. What did he pray for? Let's open his prayer journal in 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12 to find out.



Observation: Praying for Others

Use your skills of observation to see the items on Paul's prayer list.¹ Imagine sitting with him as he prays, listening to his heartfelt intensity and noticing the tears on his face. Note Paul's tone and his key phrases. Hanging on every word Paul wrote, read *2 Thessalonians 1:11–12* thoughtfully and carefully.

Praying for Others: A Must

2 Thessalonians 1:11–12

Paul's Threefold Request—2 Thessalonians 1:11

Paul sought the Lord for three things on behalf of these believers. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:11, what was Paul's first request? It ties back to his promise that God would use their persecution to "make [them] worthy of his Kingdom" (2 Thessalonians 1:5). Given the intensity of their suffering, notice what he *didn't* ask the Lord to do. Does that surprise you? How might our natural inclination to pray for them look different?

Observe Paul's second request in 1:11. What fragrant quality did the Thessalonians desire their suffering to produce? It is also among the fruit of the Spirit in [Galatians 5:22](#). What did Paul ask the Lord to do for them and why would it require the Spirit's enablement?

Third, Paul prayed that God would fulfill their "work of faith with power" (2 Thessalonians 1:11 NASB). How was their suffering cultivating this virtue? What "power" was Paul praying for?

Never once in this passage or in any other in the letter does Paul pray, "Lord, take away the affliction they're going through." He prays, "May you see your way through it. May you grow by leaps and bounds. May the Lord look upon your response and say, 'Worthy! Now that is a worthy member of My kingdom.'"
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Praying for Others: A Must

2 Thessalonians 1:11–12

Paul's Prayer Purpose—2 Thessalonians 1:12

What purpose did Paul pray would result from the Thessalonians' situation, according to 2 Thessalonians 1:12? What outcome did Paul pray for? What can only make this possible?

You know a good synonym for "name"? "Reputation." As a result of what you go through, God's reputation will be in lights. People will look back and say, "My, didn't God get glory out of that. Wasn't God obvious in that action?"
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Prayer—An Invaluable Discipline

Let's recap. Paul prayed for the Thessalonian believers that God would, *first*, enable them to live a life worthy of His call; *second*, fulfill their desire for goodness; and *third*, fulfill their work of faith with power.

Look closer at each request. What does it mean for us to live a life "worthy of his call" (2 Thessalonians 1:11)? God expects His people to act differently than the people in the world. What kingdom qualities fit our calling in hard times?

Second, what does it mean for God to fulfill our "desire for goodness" through our suffering (1:11 NASB)? Can you give an example of the fruit of "goodness" that God might produce in us during a trial?

Praying for Others: A Must

2 Thessalonians 1:11–12

Third, what does it mean for God to fulfill “the work of faith with power” (2 Thessalonians 1:11 NASB)? What is an example from your life in which God showed His power when you were suffering? How did that experience deepen your faith?

The outcome of Paul’s prayer was that the “name of our Lord Jesus [would] be honored” (1:12). How does our response to hardship bring glory to Christ?

We want relief. God wants deepening of character. We want out. God wants us through. We want to say, “It’s over!” God wants to say, “It worked!”
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Christian Calling and Suffering

If we’re not careful we may mislead new believers to expect that knowing Christ as Savior solves all their problems. But the Bible doesn’t teach that.

What is coupled with the privilege of trusting in Christ, according to *Philippians 1:29; 3:10*?

Praying for Others: A Must

2 Thessalonians 1:11–12

What benefits of prayer can we count on? In the following chart, look up the verses and write down an insight or application you glean.

Reason	Scripture	Insight / Application
Refocuses My Perspective	<i>Matthew 6:6</i>	
Quiets My Fears	<i>Philippians 4:6–7</i>	
Transfers My Burdens	<i>Matthew 11:28–29</i>	
Upholds Others in Need	<i>Colossians 4:12</i>	

You don't need a church to pray. Prayer doesn't require a cathedral. It doesn't take organ music. It doesn't even take a quiet place. You can pray at any place, at any time, for any reason. It's just making deliberate contact with the living God and connecting Him with my world at that time for whatever may be the need. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Enhancing Your Intercessory Prayer

Prayer is making deliberate contact with God in word or thought. It gives faith a voice and expresses itself as an outpouring of praise, a confession of wrong, a request for help, a declaration of need, a statement of thanks, or an intercession for others.

Let's focus on praying for others with three principles based on Paul's prayer life. When you pray for others, first, *read God's kingdom into their situations*. Look through kingdom eyes at what others are experiencing. And remember, suffering is part of kingdom life. This perspective will give you *depth* of understanding.

Praying for Others: A Must

2 Thessalonians 1:11–12

Second, *press the kingdom perspective into the pain of life*. Pray for the faith of others as much as you pray for relief of their pain. While the pain is there, their faith is growing. This will give you *peace* that you wouldn't otherwise have.

Third, *remember the ultimate goal—glorifying God*. Effective intercessory prayer is praying with understanding that there is purpose in another's pain. This will give you *objectivity*.

How well have you embraced suffering as a part of God's plan to consider you worthy of His kingdom calling? Where have you seen faithfulness and endurance? Where would you like to see growth?

Who has proven to be a faithful and constant prayer intercessor on your behalf? How has this person pointed you to Christ and to His kingdom work for proper perspective during your life trials?

Think of someone you'd like to pray for using Paul's principles. Pray that God will enable this person to live a life worthy of God's call; that God will fulfill his or her desire for goodness; and that God will fulfill this person's work of faith with power.

The next time someone shares his or her troubles with you, remember, there's nothing more important you can do for this person than pray. Prayer is God's kingdom language. It's your direct line to your King, who reveals His perspective on life and whose name we praise.

Praying for Others: A Must

2 Thessalonians 1:11–12



A FINAL PRAYER

Lord, it's as if I have been on sacred ground as I have studied and thought about prayer. It's what Your Son did the night before the cross. He prayed for me as well. He prayed to keep me from the evil one, not to take me out of the evil world. And now may the God of peace who brought from the dead our Lord Jesus, our great Shepherd, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, strengthen me in every good word and work. May I honor His name through my life. I pray for Jesus' sake. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1986, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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Study 3 • Page 8