

THE END OF PRAYER

Scripture Reading: Read 2 Thessalonians 1

The End. Words usually found at the end of a movie or at the conclusion of a novel indicating the show or work is over. It's finished. You can leave the movie theater now. You can put the book back on the shelf. The End! So, what does that have to do with today's devotional? How can we say prayer is finished, that it's done? Aren't we called by Paul to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17)? Why would or should we look to see prayer end?

Well, we don't want prayer to stop, naturally, but we do need to ask ourselves about prayer's end, not its finish but rather its goal. What is the end result of prayer? Why do we pray? For most people, it's obvious. We pray to get answers from God, right? Doesn't Scripture teach that if we ask, we shall receive? Didn't Jesus say, "*You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*"

While it's true that God graciously provides for our needs out of his abundant resources, there is a greater end to prayer than just an answer. It's an end that Paul writes about in today's chapter reading: "*With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

These verses come at the end of the 1st chapter. Let's look at them in context. Knowing that the Thessalonian believers were going through a most difficult trial of persecution, Paul wrote to encourage them to remain steadfast. The Lord would bring them through and give them relief from their suffering while also dealing judgment to those who had been persecuting them when he returns. In light of this encouragement, Paul then prayed for the church that God would count them worthy and fulfill every good purpose of theirs. He prayed this, he said, "*so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him.*" Notice, Paul prayed with a specific purpose in mind; not just that their needs would be met, that they would be protected or that they would accomplish great things. He prayed for the Lord to be glorified. This is similar to what Jesus said in the Upper Room: "*And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.*"

Ultimately, our prayers are to be about more than getting what we want or even need. They are about seeing Jesus glorified in our lives. As I have been praying recently with Paul's words in mind, I'm finding my prayers changing a bit. I'm assuming less on what I think I need and asking God for what would bring him the most glory. If the answer I think I need won't do that then I don't want that answer anymore. The End!

Action Step: Do a little monitoring of your prayer life. How often is your prayer focused on your need and the answer to it versus a desire for God's glory as prayer's end?

Prayer Focus: That your prayer life might find new richness as you seek God's glory.

Take-a-way: *Prayer's end is not an answer. It's God's glory.*