

# Prayerful Preparations

<sup>2:16</sup> Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace,  
<sup>17</sup> comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word."

<sup>3:1</sup> Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you,  
<sup>2</sup> and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.

<sup>3</sup> But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.

<sup>4</sup> And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command.

<sup>5</sup> May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

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## *What is Prayer?*

**RICHARD ALLESTREE** (*ALL-ES-TREE*) was a Puritan born in 1619 who later wrote many books including *The Whole Duty of Divine Meditation*, *The Whole Duty of Mourning and Preparing Our Selves for Death*, and *The Whole Duty of Prayer*. In his book on prayer,<sup>1</sup> he gives examples of all kinds of prayers to help people **learn how to pray**. For example, “When the Clock Strikes” pray, “Blessed be the hour in which my Lord Jesus was born, and the hour in which he died! O Lord, remember me at the hour of death, and in the Day of Judgment.” Or, “Upon Some Sudden Fear” pray, “O set me upon the Rock that is higher than I, for you are my hope, and a strong Tower for me against my enemy.” Or, “Upon Any Occasions of Sadness” pray, “Your rebuke has broken my heart, I am full of heaviness, but you, O Lord, shall lift me up again.”

At the beginning of the book he **defines prayer**. “Prayer is the duty both of soul and body; it is a humble address to God, for whatsoever we stand in need of, either in relation

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<sup>1</sup> **Richard Allestree**, *The Whole Duty of Prayer Containing Devotions for Every Day in the Week, and for Several Occasions, Ordinary and Extraordinary / by the Author of The Whole Duty of Man*, Early English Books Online (London: Printed for J.P. and sold by Ric. Janaway .., 1692).

to this life, or that which is to come.” As a “duty,” prayer is something that that you are obliged to do because it is morally right. It belongs properly speaking to your **entire person**: body and soul. And thus, merely saying rote words is not enough in prayer. You must mean the prayer that that say. And, you must address your prayers **to God**. As Jesus taught us, we pray to the Heavenly Father, though we do also find prayers addressed to Jesus (cf. **Acts 7:60**; **1Co 16:22**; **Rev 22:20**) and some in the early church advocated praying things like, “Come Holy Spirit” addressing the Third Person.<sup>2</sup> But generally, we pray *to* the Father, *by* the Spirit, *in the Name* of the Son.

The last part of his definition is that we **pray for whatever we stand in need of**. To explain what this means, Allestree divides prayer into five parts: **Confession**, **Petition** (by which is actually means begging God for pardon and grace specifically be of because of sin), **Deprecation** (which he defines as praying to God to turn away from sin, so praying for repentance), **Intercession**, and **Thanksgiving**. This is

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<sup>2</sup> I found this interesting article. **Boris Paschke**, “Praying to the Holy Spirit in Early Christianity,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 64.2 (2013): 299-316.

similar to an acronym I've used: ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication).

### Two Model of Prayer

*Alestreet with the Common Acronym*

CPDIT	ACTS
<u>C</u> onfession	<u>A</u> doration
<u>P</u> etition	<u>C</u> onfession
<u>D</u> eprecation	<u>T</u> hanksgiving
<u>I</u> ntercession	<u>S</u> upplication
<u>T</u> hanksgiving	

Either model is helpful in teaching you the different duties of prayer. Some are for our sin. Some are for our obedience. Some are for other people. Some are towards God himself and how good he is to us. Some are for our own needs in this life.

What I've found interesting in looking at his example-prayers is how, in each case, he has you remember some portion of Scripture and use it to pray. This is the age-old technique of praying God's words back to him. Of course, he also adds his own words, and that's good too. For prayer is supposed to be a conversation between you and God. By

praying your words, you let him know things that come from your heart. But in praying his words, you remind yourself that he speaks to you through his word and if you do this in prayer, then this is how **he speaks to you in prayer!**

To do this, it means that **you have to know God's word.** You have to treasure it up in your heart that you might not sin against him. Perhaps no man was more familiar with God's word (here I mean the OT) than the Apostle Paul. He's using it all the time, in places most people wouldn't even begin to think about looking for it.

## ***2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5***

In our passage today, we have five short verses which focus on prayer. Their **place in the overall letter** is important. They stand right between the mysterious and confusing discussion on the Second Coming and a list of exhortations about how to live in light of the Second Coming.

We saw last time that Ch. 2 ends with **a Benediction (2Th 2:16-17)**. Benedictions are prayers. Ch. 3 begins with **a request for prayer**. **“Brothers, pray for us” (3:1-2)**. This

request then turns into an informal prayer that Apostle directs at the brothers in Thessalonica (3-4) that turns into a formal prayer in the last verse. “May the Lord direct your hearts...” (5).

Curiously, we saw a chiasm last time that went from 2:9-15. There is another chiasm that occurs later in 3:6-12.<sup>3</sup> That means we would not be wrong to look for one here. Sure enough, we find one, and as it includes the benediction, this is the reason for returning to it, even though we looked at it last time.

- A (16) Now may our Lord Jesus **Christ** himself,
- B (16b) and **God** our Father,
- C (16c) who **loved** us, and hath given us eternal comfort and good hope through grace,
- D (17a) Comfort your **hearts**,
- E (17b) and **establish** them in every good work and word.
- F (3:1-2) **Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be glorified, as happened among you: And that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all men have faith.**
- F' (3a) **But the Lord is faithful,**
- E' (3b-4) 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 we command.
- D' (5a) May the Lord direct your **hearts**
- C' (5b) to the **love**
- B' (5c) of **God**,
- A' (5d) and into the steadfastness of **Christ**.

<sup>3</sup> On the latter, see the biblical chiasm exchange.  
<https://www.chiasmusxchange.com/2014/12/16/2-thessalonians-36-12/>.

What I want to do now is look at the passage from the perspective of what I just said about [praying the Scripture](#) from Allestree's examples. In doing this, I want you see how packed these few verses actually are and how helpful they can be.

## *Paul's Use of Psalm 78*

When people pray the Scripture, what they'll often do is sort of [take a verse](#) that applies generally to their situation. This is exactly what we saw Allestree do in his examples. “[Are you worried or fearful of something? Here, Psalm 61:2 talks about being led to the Rock that is higher than I. Pray that.](#)” When the Apostle gets some idea in his head from the OT that he will use for either a prayer or an argument, he [often has the entire context](#) in his head, not just a verse. We've seen this as recently as 2 Thessalonians 2 and his use of Isaiah 66 in helping to talk about the Day of the LORD. We saw how rich and helpful it is to go back and read Isaiah 66 in trying to understand his very complex ideas.

He does the same thing here in these verses, and the passage that now seems to captivate his mind more than any

other is [Psalm 78](#). One scholar wrote a fascinating article on this<sup>4</sup> and he pointed out certain verbal similarities, not to mention thematic ones between the two passages. He also pointed out that Paul's thinking here is virtually identical to that of 1 Corinthians 10, where he clearly has Psalm 78 in mind.

Among these similarities are phrases like [2Th 3:5](#)'s “direct your hearts” (*kateuthynai hymōn tas kardias*) [Ps 78:8](#)'s, “directed its heart” (*katēuthunen tēn kardia autēs*). In [3:2](#), “not all have faith” (*ou ... tantōn hē pistis*) is very similar to [Ps 78:22](#), “They had no faith in God” (*episteusan en tō theō oude*). In the Psalm, the people were a wicked generation not faithful to God ([Ps 78:8](#)). Paul's hope is for the Thessalonians is in the “steadfastness of Christ” ([2Th 3:5](#)). There is a logical relationship between these words “faith/ful” and “steadfast” and Paul began his letter this very way, “We boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith...” ([2Th 1:4](#)).

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<sup>4</sup> See [Nijay Gupta](#), “An Apocalyptic Reading of Psalm 78 in 2 Thessalonians 3,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31:2 (2008): 179-94.

There are other parallel words including 2Th 2:16's "love" and "eternal" and "hope" and "work" and "evil" angels and "faith" and "keep" and "do" and more that all link these texts together through common words.

2 Thessalonians		Psalm 78	
2:16	God who <b>loved</b> us.	68	He chose [us whom] he <b>loves</b> .
	Gave us <b>eternal</b> comfort.	66	Put them to <b>eternal</b> shame.
	... and good <b>hope</b> through grace.	7, 53	That they might set their <b>hope</b> on God ... he guided them with hope.
2:17	Comfort your <b>hearts</b> ...	8, 18, 37, 72	Set not its <b>heart</b> aright; tempted God in their <b>hearts</b> ; <b>heart</b> was not right; innocency of their <b>heart</b> .
	... in every good <b>work</b> and word.	7	... and not forget the works of God.
3:2	... perverse and <b>evil</b> men; the <b>Evil One</b> .	49	... a message by <b>evil</b> angels.
	... not all have <b>faith</b>	22	... the had no <b>faith</b> in God.
3:3	... <b>keep</b> you from the evil one.	10, 56	They did not <b>keep</b> God's covenant; ... <b>kept</b> not his testimonies.
3:4	<b>Do</b> what we command.	4, 12	The works he has <b>done</b> ; miracles which he has <b>done</b> .
3:5	... <b>direct our hearts</b>	8	... <b>directed its heart</b>
	... <b>steadfastness</b> of Christ.		... not <b>steadfast</b> with God.

But there are other kinds of parallels. These prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Paul is basically using this entire Psalm as the backdrop of his prayer here. Those parallels are all **conceptual** and **circumstantial**, by which I mean the Apostle clearly thought that somehow the circumstances this church was in bore a certain resemblance this great song

written so long ago by Asaph. Paul was, as one commentator puts it, reading Psalm 78 “apocalyptically”<sup>5</sup> in light of the present situation where their bad theology of the Day of the LORD was leading to bad ethics.

Because of this, I want to look first at this Psalm and then at our prayer. I think you will discover that the parallels between them bring these various prayers together and add context to make them come alive. And, I think it can help you think about how you can pray God’s word in creative and important ways that perhaps you never thought about.

## *Psalm 78*

**Psalm 78** is the **second longest Psalm** (behind only 119). It is a twin Psalm with its predecessor—**Psalm 77**. Both are **war songs**. Both recount **Israel’s history**. And in these ways, both relate to God’s judgment and hence, can be read apocalyptically. They do it in different ways. Psalm 77 is a cry for God to hear. Psalm 78 is its answer. “**Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my**

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<sup>5</sup> See note above. **G. P. Wiles**, *Paul’s Intercessory Prayers*. SNTSMS 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 41.

mouth” (Ps 78:1). It is called a *maskil*, meaning that its purpose is not merely to praise, but to instruct. It is as much theological and ethical as it is historical or poetic. The context of Psalm 78, like its opening which sounds almost proverbial, says that it is a **parable** or a **dark saying** (like a riddle; 2-3). Therefore, while it is an historical song recounting much of Israel’s history, including a lot of her wickedness and faithlessness, its purpose is to instruct the people via their own history and the story it tells, **not to behave this way again**. But it does so in deep ways that make you have to think about them. And this is no moralistic Psalm either, it is deeply rooted in God’s goodness, i.e. the Gospel.

The song begins by talking about **the future**, then recounting **the past**, and finally dealing with **the present**. The future: “**We will not hide them from their children, but tell them to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done**” (4). This may be a chief reason why Paul was so drawn to it. He is now figuring how he can apply this very song to his generation, just like the song tells him to. This shows you **the continuing relevance of the Old Testament** for making practical applications today. Far from being an irrelevant

dusty old tome written by a bunch of dead guys from some by-gone out-of-touch time that couldn't possibly know what it's like to live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is actually as opposite as you can get from that kind of naïve and dangerous thinking.

This verse says that we will **not hide** something. Hide what? Hide **the past**. The future needs the past in order to deal properly with coming (or present) troubles. Specifically, we will not hide *the deeds of the LORD or the sins of our Fathers*. Both are necessary to communicate. But we will talk about both of them together so that we can on one hand see how sinful we can be, so that will not idolize and idealize a past that never existed, and on the other so that we can see that only hope and solution to our sin: God's faithfulness—his faithfulness to his covenant, his promises, and his word.

Let me take **some of the word parallels** and focus on them (these are all found in the chart above). Regarding God, the song says **he chose us and loves us**. It says that he has **done great works** and miracles. It says that he led the people in the wilderness so that they might set their **hope** on God. In fact, he guided them with great hope! These are all positively, wonderful things! Yet, one parallel is not happy

(though it is just and righteous), for the wicked, he put them to eternal shame.

Regarding the people, however, it is almost all negative. They did not set their heart on what was right. They tempted God in their hearts. They had no faith in God. They did not keep God's covenant nor his testimonies. They were not steadfast with God, but wandered like lost sheep, each on turning to his own way. They forgot the works of God, which becomes an explicit teaching point for the coming generation not to do this. These are all parts of the song Paul is directly alluding to in his prayer.

**Vs. 8** says that you should not be “like your fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.” This verse becomes the climactic point of Paul's prayer in our last verse today. The reason why is obvious. The whole psalm is being written with this purpose in mind, so that these Christians will, with their whole heart and soul, be steadfast in their faithfulness to God, even as he is steadfast in his faithfulness to them. But how does he get this across to them? It is much more indirect. It is through a

prayer that is informed by this psalm, and thus, they probably don't even know what he is doing. But Paul does!

## *2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5*

Let's turn now to 2 Thessalonians. Reading this passage all at once, without the background I've given you, it is tempting to read it as almost three separate things and, importantly, *unrelated* things: a prayer to God, a prayer request for the Apostle, and prayer for the Thessalonians. Yes, they are all in one way or another dealing with the topic of prayer. Most people see that. But other than this, they don't seem very connected. In fact, that's apparently how the scribe who first created the chapter breaks saw it, because he breaks the chapter in the middle of what I would say is a single unit of thought. He didn't see the connection.

He is not the only one. Some have looked at 3:1-5 and thought that it is so “*roughly composed*” and “*such a disjointed paragraph*” that maybe Paul got distracted after he finished the doxology that when he finally got to return to his letter, he didn't give enough care to finishing his train of thought. In fact, he may have originally meant to just finish

the letter at **vs. 5** but for some reason continued it.<sup>6</sup> Commentaries almost always deal with **3:1-5** completely apart from **2:16-17**. Hardly anyone seems to notice the connections.

As far as what I just said about this being do disjointed, I find these kinds of speculations laughable. How any serious scholar can say such things just shows they didn't do their homework. That's one of the points of showing you the **three chiasms**. A chiasm is proof that something is a single unit of thought. How Paul would have broken off his train of thought in a middle of a chiastic structure and somehow, apparently, not even realize he was going to end up with a chiasm even though he magically produced one at the end of his distraction is really quite remarkable. It is too remarkable. It is no accident. So, I take the whole unit together.

After dividing the unit into these three sections, the first thing I noticed was the verbs. In **the benediction (2:16-17)**, the verbs move from a kind of past yet still continuing

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<sup>6</sup> **Charles A. Wanamaker**, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 273-74.

“love/gave” (*aorist active participles*) to a verb (“comfort”) expressing a wish or desire in the future (*optative mood*). So, **past-ongoing to future**.

In his prayer for himself (3:1-2), he then switches tenses and mood to a *present tense imperative-command* (“pray”) and again to a couple of verbs of wish or desire (“may speed ahead,” *optative*; “we may be delivered,” *subjunctive*). So, **present to future**.

In the third section he starts with the present active verb “is” faithful, moves to a future tense that states more than a wish but confidence (“will establish;” *future act. ind.*), goes to a *perfect active verb* “we have confidence,” back to a *present active verb* (“command”), and finally back to a *verb expressing a wish or desire*, “may the Lord” (*optative*).

The reason I find this all so interesting is because **his prayer is reflecting the temporal changes found in Psalm 78!** Just as the Psalm used the past to teach the present about the future, so too this prayer is using the past to pray for the present and the future by using the psalm as he prays! In other words, he is doing the very thing that the beginning of the Psalm tells him to do! He is teaching a new generation.

He's doing it through prayer! And it is all quite below the surface. I find that fascinating.

So, what is the prayer about, and how does it parallel Psalm 78? We will start with **the benediction**. A benediction is a “ **blessing**.” Literally, it is a speaking-well of someone (from *bene* “well” and *dicere* “to speak”). It is a prayer, not to the person directly, but indirectly. The prayer itself is directed towards God. Thus, he invokes “**our Lord Jesus Christ**” and “**God our Father**.” He says Jesus “**himself**,” as in none other than him. *This* Jesus, the one we have proclaimed to you, the Jesus who is alive, who rose from the dead, who is coming again. May this very Jesus and God our Father. It is often that Scripture attributes the title “God” to the Father, even though Jesus is also called God in the NT.

But the very fact that **they are together** here shows that they are both God. What it says next confirms this for it says, “**who loved us and gave us eternal comfort**.” The **verb is singular** but has a **dual subject** (Jesus and the Father), meaning that there is only one Being who is loving and giving comfort.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Here's a note I got from a Greek professor on this question, and I was kind of surprised that he said the grammar pretty strongly supports this view. I thought I would have to make more of a theological point and that the grammar would be more ambiguous. “**I had a similar question**”

But this **one Being is more than one Person**. This “love” would seem to refer both to the Father’s setting his love upon us in election (this is the very thing **Psalm 78:68** says in the **verbal parallel**) and his sending his Son to die for our sins (**John 3:16**), as well as the love of the Son in doing that for us! These things in turn give the Christian “**eternal comfort**” and “**good hope through grace**.” Just here there are **two more parallels** with Psalm 78. Except unlike God where there is a one-to-one because God does not change, the parallel is that whereas **God gave us eternal comfort, he gave them eternal shame (Ps 78:66)**. He did this because they did not set their **hope** on God! But he has given us hope by grace, grace that comes through Jesus Christ.

If the contrast is those without hope and with eternal shame vs. us with eternal comfort because of the hope given in Christ, then you have to know that **without Christ, you**

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posed to me recently from a different verse with different subjects. But the answer I think is the same. The short answer is yes. The verb refers to both. It is generally acknowledged that when a structure like this happens (dual subject with singular verb) that the first subject is being ‘highlighted’ of the two [in this case, Jesus]. If you were to look in Dan Wallace’s grammar, he argues for this. While this is true sometimes, it is not true all the time. BDF §135 provides, what I think, are helpful guidelines - this is true except when the subjects are viewed as equal or as a group or when the subjects are not persons. I would make the argument here that both Jesus and God are being viewed as equal and therefore the singular verb is referring to both rather than referring to both but highlighting Jesus.” Michael Emadi, 2-14-2019.

are in the first group. This hope is not automatic. Just because I say comforting things here does not mean it translates into your heart. You have to internalize through faith that Jesus has loved you and that by grace he has died for your sins, thereby providing atonement for you so that God will not send you off to eternal shame. Believe this now, for just behind these words in both Paul and the Psalm there is an apocalyptic vision of the Second Coming of Jesus who, when he returns, will come in judgment, separating those who have trusted him from those who have not, and sending each one off to their eternal reward, either of comfort or shame—shame for despising his good grace in Jesus.

Now, notice in **2Th 2:16** the words our Lord Jesus “**Christ**,” and “**God**” our Father, who “**loved** us,” and “your **hearts**.” These are inversely parallel to “your **hearts**,” the “**love**,” of “**God**,” into the steadfastness of “**Christ**” (**3:5**). This wasn’t an accident. What that means, practically speaking, is that the opening of the benediction with its verbs of past-ongoing action on God’s part—namely his love and eternal comfort, becomes **the theological foundation** of the wish expressed in the last verse, that this same Lord would direct your hearts to the love of God in the steadfastness of

Christ. In other words, what “is” becomes the foundation of “what will be.” That’s his prayer. Your prayers for the future should always be rooted in what is true in the present, especially when thinking about what God has done and what you hope that he will do. Make sure your prayers for the future are in accordance with what is true about God now, and in this way, your prayers will be effectual and meaningful.

But why would he have to pray this? It is because of [sin](#). We see much of sin in Psalm 78, and the way the Apostle uses their sin here is truly comforting—at least for those who know Jesus as Lord. Indeed, “[comfort](#)” is a word found twice in the benediction. His purpose is to comfort, and the way he does it is by [juxtaposing](#) that wicked generation with us today (be they the Thessalonians or our church for we both are living in the same “age to come” that was brought by Jesus).

Here is how he compares the two. The benediction concludes, “[\[May God\] comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word](#)” ([2Th 2:17](#)). There are two parallels here to look at. The first is a parallel with Psalm 78. This is, again, a negative parallel. His wish-prayer is that

God would **comfort their hearts**. However, this is against the backdrop of that wicked generation **not having their hearts right**, tempting God in their hearts.

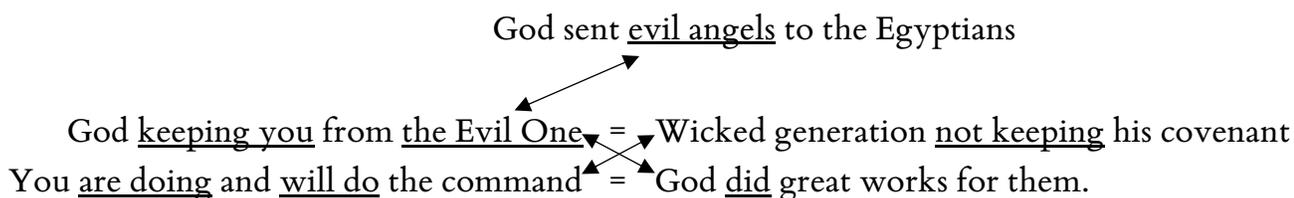
This is precisely why he wants God to establish them in ever right *work and word*! That evil generation did not do the works of God because they spurned the Word of God, despising it, mocking it, testing it, complaining about it. And not just “it” but *Him*, for Christ is that Word whom they wanted no part of. Thus, Christ starts the chiasm and ends it, showing just how vital he is in this prayer.

The second parallel is with **2Th 3:3-5** and the words “**hearts**” and “**establish.**” Again, notice that 2:17 has the words “**heart**” and “**establish.**” These are again inversely parallel in **3:3**’s “**establish**” and **3:5**’s. “**heart.**” **3-5** are drawing upon the same theological foundation as **2:17**. “**But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard (keep) you against the evil one” (**3**).**

We know from the Lord’s Prayer that we are to pray to the Father to keep us from the Evil One. There is a parallel here with the **LORD** sending “**evil**” **angels** to the Egyptians to destroy them for what they had done to his people (**Ps 78:49**). He who commands and sends evil angels also has the

power to protect and preserve you from them! There is another parallel that contrasts God keeping you from the evil one” and that wicked generation not keeping God’s covenant or his testimonies. Therefore, the wishful prayer, “May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ” (2Th 3:5).

3:4 stands in the middle of these word parallels. It says, “And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command.” The connection with Psalm 78 here is the word “do.” We have confidence that you “are doing” and “will do” the things that we command. Present to future. This contrasts with the past of that wicked generation that, though God “has done great works,” the people refused to follow in his ways. They forgot his testimonies and did not keep his covenant (see the parallel on “keeping you from the evil.



So, Paul’s prayer here is being rooted, again, in the faithfulness of God and, through Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate

end of this prayer (i.e. it's very last word). It is **through Christ** that God keeps you from the Evil One. And the strange thing here seems to be implied that when we do not keep his covenant because we sin like they did (i.e. keep reading on in Ch. 3 to see this), Christ did keep it. And if we are in Christ, then because of that, the Apostle has confidence that we are doing and will do what is commanded! This is the mystery of the Gospel, the secret of Godward obedience. I don't know any other way of explaining how it is that he can so greatly contrast these two groups when the same God is good in both cases. The reason there is a juxtaposition is because of Christ and the two different ages, theirs and ours. He is the difference! Because he has been faithful, he will bring us to obedience.

The center of the chiasm is actually the first two verses of ch. 3 and these are the last verses we have yet to discuss. It begins with **“Finally.”** This is a word connecting to what was just said and introducing the last chapter. **“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” (3:1-2).**

Whether you look at these verses as the start of a chapter or the center of a structure, either way it shows **their importance**. That importance is related to what I just said. The main parallel in these verses with Psalm 78 is this idea of **faith**. That wicked generation “**had no faith in God**” (**Ps 78:22**). This is now compared, not with the *faithfulness* of the Thessalonians, as you might expect from what we have been seeing, but rather to the *faithlessness* of some. These “some” are called here wicked and evil men. And they directly parallel the wicked generation of the wilderness and Exodus in Psalm 78.

This has led to a question. The question is, how can the Apostle be so confident about these people, thereby implying that everything is different because Christ has come and has brought in the age-to-come, when some are still behaving exactly like those of that old age?

The answer is that there is, at present, **an overlap between the ages** (and those ages also overlap in our own hearts). This present evil age of which the wicked generation of the psalm was a part has not ended. It ends at the Second Coming. But they were not in the age-to-come except by way of types and shadows. We are in it, because the Light of

Christ has dispelled those shadows and brought in the Sun of Righteousness.

So, there are still wicked men (and we also still sin), and there are still many who do not have faith, even when the gospel comes to them in the fulness of Christ's resurrection, they reject the message and become just like those who fell in the desert. The only solution to this is what I just said about Christ and it is the first verse of this chapter and the very heart and soul of the whole thing.

Though it is a prayer for himself, “**brothers, pray for us,**” it is really his appeal to them to pray “**that the Word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored.**” What is this word? The word of God is always two-pronged if you ask me.

First, it is **the message of the Gospel**, even that very Gospel I've just given you. The Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile (**Rom 1:16-17**). This is what he means by “**as happened among you.**” It went forth in power and saved them. He wants that message to be unhindered and for the Christians to pray that this would be so. He wants it to

speed ahead of him, as even happened here as he heard reports of their faith all way in Corinth after he was forced to leave.

Second, [the word is the Second Person of the Trinity](#)—he who begins the benediction and ends the prayer; he who, by his Spirit, impowers his word, his powerful word, his word that is a hammer, his word that is a fire; he who speeds ahead and goes before all who present his message. The prayer is that he might be pleased to awaken men's souls that he would be honored among men, men who so wickedly rebel against him, though he is good and faithful and kind in all that he does.

This passage, therefore, is both [a model prayer](#) for you to emulate, and [a prayer that teaches you how to pray](#). Emulate the benediction in your prayers. Pray for the good-will of other Christians, especially in their witnessing and giving the Gospel. Pray for yourself to be emboldened to share the Gospel and for that Gospel to be powerful when you speak it. Pray for others that they may stand firm and be strengthened in faith. Pray with confidence that these will be true because they are true.

But more. [Learn your Scripture!](#) Learn how to pray it. Learn from its history, its lessons, its explicit teachings on how men behave and how they are changed and apply those Scriptures in your own prayers that they might be effectual and you might have confident hope. This is how you prepare yourself for powerful prayers.

In these prayers, direct them to the Father, by the Spirit, because of Christ—who is your hope and comfort, the one who establishes your hearts and prepares your bodies and minds for every good work and word. How do I know? Because that’s what the word says. That’s the prayer here. And I have confidence it is truthfulness and power. Let us all have such confidence today.

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