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We spent some time looking at Paul's prayer at the end of 1 Thessalonians 3 last Sunday and thought about what it means to pray for people. When praying for people it can sometimes be difficult to know what to pray and often our prayers are very practical asking God to supply for our needs. But Paul models for us prayers for spiritual growth.

Praying for people

As we know from the week before Paul is to return to Thessalonica to encourage the church and help them in their faith. He received a good report from Timothy but is now he wants to teach them more. Verse 10 shows us how important the people are and how serious prayer is to him. He pleads earnestly whenever he can that God would make a way back for him.

Praying people will love

In verse 12 Paul's main prayer for this church is that they would love one another and everyone. He asked the Lord to increase their love so it overflows even to those who might hate them. Paul doesn't pray for safety or freedom he prays for love for love is the key Christian virtue.

Praying love leads to holiness

In better 13 Paul showed us that love strengthens our hearts so we are blameless and holy. Love fulfills the law love conquers every evil and so love will outlast everything else. When the Lord Jesus comes to return to as judge Christians will stand before God in the love of Christ but Christians will be judged by how much they have loved while following Jesus.

As always here are a few questions to start off your group discussion.

Remind one another of the story so far?
What does Paul pray for in vv 10-11 and why?
How might the Thess be lacking in faith?

Praying for people

What do we notice about how Paul prays in verse 10?
From your knowledge of Paul across the New Testament what did prayer play in his ministry?
Are your prayers for people that earnest or persistent?
How can we help one another to make this kind of praying a habit?

Praying people will love

What is the main thing Paul prays for in v 12?
What does that kind of love look like? (how is Paul's love for the Thess an example of this? Think back to how Paul shows his love
What would it look like to pray that we love one another?
What would it look like to pray we love everyone?
How might this be difficult?
Are we supposed to do it in our own effort? How does Jesus help?

Praying love leads to holiness

Why is love so central to Christian faith? How is Jesus the perfect model of Love?
What does v 13 say is the result of love?
How are hearts strengthened by love?
What would it look like to be blameless in holiness through love? Give examples

Do you ever think about the day you'll stand before God when Jesus returns?
What does it mean that Jesus is coming back as judge?
What will be your confidence on that day?
How will our prayers of love influence eternity?