

AN INEXPRESSIBLE THANKSGIVING

1st Thessalonians 3:6-13

Introduction: When we observe a 4-year-old child pray with eyes closed tight and begin saying, “Now I lay me down to sleep ... thank you for blessing mommy and daddy, sissy, grandma and grandpa ...” a child’s thanksgiving prayer is so sweet and trusting. How about when we as adults pray? Are we sincere? We must ask ourselves the question, “Is our thanksgiving prayer as trusting as the 4-year-old’s prayer?” Is it heartfelt? It is possible to become perfunctory in our exercise of prayer and thanksgiving and to become complacent in its purpose. James admonishes us to pray fervently in James 5:16 (boiling hot). Let’s look at 1st Thessalonians chapter 3 where we find an unusual type of pure thanksgiving. It is a thanksgiving that is without vain repetitions or hollow praise; rather, it is a spontaneous, inexpressible, and abundant thanksgiving.

- I. Paul’s assurance of their state. 1st Thessalonians 3:1-5. Paul had a special relationship with the Thessalonian believers. While he was not with them very long, he had an inexpressible thanksgiving in his heart for them. For that, one must have great love.
 - A. His compassion. Verses 1-2. To Paul, this was more than a job; it was a concern for their faith and their continuation. This refers back to when he shared their importance to him in chapter 2, where he said, “For you are our glory and joy.” Verse 20.
 - B. His comforting. 3:3-4. Paul was concerned that they might become discouraged over the trials he was going through. He was treated badly by the unbelievers of the area, and the Christians felt despondent over it.
 - C. His concern. Verse 5. Here he confesses that he can no longer endure not knowing for certain of their steadfastness. He has vested interest in the Thessalonians. Paul loves them deeply.
- II. Paul receives assurance of their stand. 3:6-9. The story in Acts 17 tells us that the Thessalonian Christians compelled Paul to leave for his own safety. Paul was encouraged by the good report from Timothy.
 - A. Their faith was strong. Verse 6. Paul’s inexpressible thanksgiving was rooted in their still regarding him highly.
 - B. Their fellowship was special. Verse 7. The things Paul endured for the cause of the gospel faded when he was told of their stand. He felt rewarded for his labor. Their faith was a blessing to Paul.
 - C. Their fates were singular. Verses 8-9. Paul took grounding them in Christ as a crucial matter. Paul’s ministry was not a show, but a heartfelt ministry of concern for those he ministered to.
- III. Paul’s appeal for their success. Verse 10-13. While Paul was pleased with Timothy’s good report, he then prayed for their future success. An inexpressible thanksgiving is not stagnant but is always looking to the future.
 - A. A powerful desire. Verse 10-11. Paul desired to finish the ministry he began with them.
 - B. A precious direction. Verse 12. He wanted their love to abound toward ...
 - 1) one another
 - 2) all men
 - C. A perfect deliverance. Verse 13 firmly established them for a perfect purpose, for them to go all the way.

Conclusion: Paul is a great example of one who had an inexpressible thanksgiving to God for the honor of representing the Lord in ministering to the Thessalonians. When we evaluate who God is and how fortunate we are to represent Him, thanksgiving floods our hearts.