

My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.

Prayer of Confession:

Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved You with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done Your will, we have broken Your law, we have rebelled against Your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

We know that someday Christ will return and we are told to live a life that follows in His path until that day comes. We can struggle with understanding that and remembering that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. It can be hard with all the distractions of the world for your family to stay focused on walking "in the light of Christ." Take time this week together to schedule a practical time each week where you refocus on your family's devotional time. Remind yourselves who is the center of your family and how you can invite Christ in each day.

MONDAY 5.31.21 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

We have seen throughout 1 Thessalonians that a driving theme of the entire letter is the return of Christ. Many Christians are surprised to discover that it is here, in today's reading from 1 Thessalonians, that the expectation of "the Rapture" is found—and not in the book of Revelation! Even though when this letter was written by Paul, Silas, and Timothy, Christ's return had not been "delayed" for long—it had only been around 20 years since the Resurrection—people were already beginning to ask about the fate of those who died before Christ returned. What the letter insists upon is that we can be assured that just as Christ was resurrected, believers who have died will also be resurrected, and will return with Christ at His Second Coming. Anyone who is still alive at the Second Coming will join with them, as part of the envoy escorting Jesus on his return! Although Paul is not explicit about it, it is clear that these events inaugurate the re-creation of the Kingdom of God on earth—and everyone who has faith in Christ, dead or alive, will be raised to participate in the joyous occasion. "And so, we will be with the Lord forever." We, like the original audience, should take encouragement from this news!

- Are you encouraged by these words? How, and why?

TUESDAY 6.1.21 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Like us, the natural follow-up to talking about Christ's return for the recipients of this letter was "Yes, but when?" The letter insists that "times and dates" cannot be known, but that it will happen without warning. "Peace and Safety" was a common Roman slogan at the time, promoting the government's role in keeping the peace ... but Paul, Silas, and Timothy insist that the end can come even if all seems peaceful and safe. Notice how they use the word "sleep" in three different ways—literally ("those who sleep, sleep at night"), metaphorically for being ignorant of Christ ("let us not be like others who are asleep"), and as a euphemism for death ("He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him"). The point is that when we walk "in the light of Christ," the darkness of "sleep" - however we might use that word—has no impact on our eternal destinies. We don't have to worry about missing out on the glorious return of Christ if we happen to be physically asleep, or even if we die, as long as we diligently "stay awake," persevering in the faith. Once again, we, like the original readers, should take encouragement from these words!

- How hard is it for you to live in an attitude of expectancy of the return of Christ? Could you be accused of being asleep?

WEDNESDAY 6.2.21 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

We have now reached the conclusion of the first letter to the Thessalonians. The ending almost seems rushed, as no fewer than seventeen direct commands are given regarding how the Thessalonians should behave moving forward! Respect hard workers. Hold leaders in high regard. Live in peace. Warn the idle. Encourage the timid. Help the weak. Be patient with all. Don't take revenge. Be kind to each other. Be joyful. Pray. Give thanks. Don't quench the Holy Spirit. Don't reject prophecy. Test what you are told. Keep doing good. Avoid doing bad. If the Thessalonians can cooperate with the work of God by doing these things, they will grow in their sanctification (their holiness), and they will be fully prepared for Christ's return. Because God is faithful, the Thessalonians should believe that God can accomplish all of this in their lives. Living holy lives in the midst of a culture that is often hostile to Christian values can be difficult. But the letter insists that through the power of the Holy Spirit, God can truly sanctify a human life, so that when Christ returns, He can be accompanied by a new Israel (both the living and the dead) that is truly holy and blameless—the kind of Israel God wants.

- How can the message of 1 Thessalonians impact your life?

THURSDAY 6.3.21 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

Like the first letter to Thessalonica, this second letter states that it is from the team of Paul, Silas, and Timothy, although some scholars think the content dates the letter to after Paul's death. If Paul did have a hand in writing it, it was probably late in his life, such that his expectation of the imminent return of Christ has been tempered. Like the earlier letter, the Second Coming of Christ is a primary theme. In fact, it seems that the letter may have been occasioned by the knowledge that the Thessalonians were being deceived with regard to Christ's return. In today's reading, the writers begin by offering a word of thanksgiving for the way the Thessalonian church is thriving in spite of persecution. Still, there is an emphasis on the return of Christ, with assurance being given that those who are actively persecuting Christians and rejecting their testimony will be excluded and punished for their behavior when Christ does arrive. To ensure that the faithful Thessalonians can continue in their faithfulness, the authors hold them in prayer at all times, so that God's work in and through the Thessalonians can be accomplished.

- How do you feel about the language of punishment for failure to acknowledge Christ? How would those being persecuted by such persons feel about it?

