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<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

### **Personal Study of the Bible-36 (2 Thessalonians – 4 prayers of Paul)**

Before moving into our personal Bible study lesson, I would like to re-emphasize the importance for every believer to read his Bible regularly, often, and repeatedly. It is the only way to have a correct or full view of the true nature of Christian truth. In other words, it is impossible to have a full, balanced, and mature view of Christianity, especially in the area of the spiritual life and virtue, apart from a personal understanding of the Bible, which is impossible apart from a lot of time personally reading, re-reading and reflecting on the Text. Only a patient, personal mastery of the contents of your Bible will give you an adequate appreciation for the abiding value and richness of Christian truths. There are six steps to gaining mastery of these epistles that we are now studying: 1) Read the epistle *straight through* at one sitting; 2) notice the setting of the epistle, 3) study the introduction of the epistle; 4) notice the outline of the epistle from the introduction; 5) make a *verse-by-verse* study of the epistle; and 6) meditate upon and *digest* the *results* of your study. By habitually working through these steps, you will not only discover new truths, you will see truths that you already know in a whole new light. You will gain a depth you never thought was possible. One of the most important benefits of such a personal study is that you will come to love the Bible and its truths more because you will not be handicapped by looking at the Bible *merely* to solve some problem; you will be able to shed any attitude that you might have that the Bible is only about handling your problems or making you feel better. It will definitely do that, but as a *result* of understanding and loving Truth as such, God, and His plan.

Let's take the first step above: read the epistle straight through at one sitting. Seek to follow the train of thought as you read. Then read it again, and yet again. The more often it is read the better. If you wish, read other versions like the New King James or New American Standard. Only by a *repeated* and *direct* reading of the Text will you begin to gain a mastery of its marvelous truths as they are laid out by God in Holy Scripture. In-depth Bible classes can never replace a direct acquaintance with the Bible for yourself. Neither does the reading of commentaries eliminate the need for a personal reading and rereading of them. Those who have gained mastery of biblical truths are those who have been persistent readers of the Bible. Some of the greatest Bible teachers, like Campbell Morgan would read a book of the Bible fifty times before he would write one word of his sermon. The idea in this repeated reading of an epistle is first of all to get a clear impression of its general contents and character. The effort should be to get a bird's-eye view of the entire epistle. Then concentration upon minor divisions and smaller details will follow. No student is ready for a detailed study of the epistle until he is thoroughly conversant with the general thought trend and feeling of the book. And this can only be gained by a repeated reading of the epistle.

The lesson for today is to re-read 2 Thessalonians (it will take about 6 minutes) and make an outline of the 4 prayers of Paul for the Thessalonians. They are in 1:11-12; 2:16-17; 3:5; and 3:16. I would like for you to write down the prayers, think about them, and reflect on what they say about Paul, all Christians, the Christian way of life, and your own life and focus [=love].

*In 'Ehyeh,*

*Pastor Don Hargrove*