

R U Ready? 1-2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians 3

“Grace In The Waiting”

Time to wrap up our series on 1-2 Thessalonians with some powerful yet practical truths we need in our walk with Christ today—and in the waiting for His glorious return.

2 Thessalonians 3:1

(KJV) Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

(NIV) As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.

Finishing up his letter to the Thessalonian believers, Paul has seen enough good fruit borne from his spiritual children to now ask them for prayer. In the same way the Word of God has grown in their fertile hearts, and manifested itself in love and obedience, Paul asks them to pray that the Word would be honoured and grow in the hearts of the Corinthian believers to whom he and his team were presently ministering. Paul understood that prayer was the essential water that helped God’s work grow:

1Corinthians 3:6-8

I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Recall a church project—missions or otherwise—that you were involved with. How much prayer was offered concerning God’s blessing and direction of the project? Were there any ways you see now how prayer may have been central to the success of this project—or any future project? Think of specifics.

*STUDY POINT: Conduct a personal Bible study focusing on three major Old Testament conquests involving Israel—two that were carried out with careful obedience to God, and one that was not. Compare the outcomes. Note what specific/most important differences prayer made then in Old Testament times, then bring it home to your own life, writing down how prayer has made a difference at the life-changing crossroads you’ve experienced thus far.

2 Thessalonians 3:2

(KJV) And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

(NIV) And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith.

All men have not faith. Paul's understatement here calls attention to the ongoing resistance to the gospel he, Silas, and Timothy were still experiencing. Whether it is religious, churchy people without the Holy Spirit or those that practice perpetual pagan idolatry of the world system, resistance to the gospel has been and will always be real to true followers of Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Certainly those believers in Thessalonica continued to endure persecution from "unreasonable and wicked men" and so Paul appeals to those suffering to pray for his ongoing mission of spreading the gospel amidst great opposition. Again, Paul understands the power of prayer and is not ashamed to ask for it.

Following his prayer requests to the Thessalonian Christians, he now returns to full encouragement mode with this prayer powered by Paul's confidence in God's ability to strengthen and deliver His children under duress.

2 Thessalonians 3:3

(KJV) But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

(NIV) But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.

2 Thessalonians 3:4

(KJV) And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

(NIV) We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command.

2 Thessalonians 3:5

(KJV) And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

(NIV) May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

God is able! Thank you, Paul. We can't help but hear the voice of our Good Shepherd (John 10:1-21) through your sincere prayer.

2 Thessalonians 3:6

(KJV) Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

(NIV) In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.

2 Thessalonians 3:7

(KJV) For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

(NIV) For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you,

2 Thessalonians 3:8

(KJV) Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

(NIV) nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you.

2 Thessalonians 3:9

(KJV) Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

(NIV) We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate.

2 Thessalonians 3:10

(KJV) For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

(NIV) For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."

2 Thessalonians 3:11

(KJV) For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

(NIV) We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies.

2 Thessalonians 3:12

(KJV) Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

(NIV) Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat.

Last week, I spoke of the importance of keeping the Biblical text in context, without pretext. This portion of text must be understood in proper context—not ripped out of its intended meaning just to make it fit our application today. So what is happening here in these verses? Paul is especially concerned about those believers in Thessalonica who have quit their jobs and incomes in order to wait on the return of Christ. They have dropped out of God-ordained quiet and productive lives and were unwilling to work. This may sound like an

especially spiritual thing to do, but Paul had already reminded them that the day of the Lord was not imminent (See 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12), and therefore they needed to drop out of their dream state—stop freeloading from others and meddling in other people’s lives—and get back to work.

Ecclesiastes 5:7

For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.

Brethren, it is so easy to fall into the trap of being a vain dreamer at the expense of the responsibilities God puts right in front of us every day. We glorify God most when we tend to the daily matters at hand. In fact, we should rejoice in daily life:

Psalms 118:24

This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Matthew 6:34

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Folks, God will take care of the future. This is not to say that God-given dreams do not have their purpose—they do! They help get us out of bed in the morning so we can live with purpose (Jeremiah 29:11). However, Paul here is dealing with an attitude of stubborn pride that was affecting the peace and witness of the believing community at Thessalonica.

So, we can take encouragement from Paul in the sense of continuing to follow Jesus step by step, looking to Him as we work, minister and serve our Master each day. This is God’s will as we wait on the day of the Lord. And, importantly, Hebrews 3:13 and Ephesians 4:15 instruct us to speak the truth in love into each other’s lives—so that we don’t fall into sin and become apathetic and ineffective (See also 2 Peter 1:3-15) in our walk with God.

2 Thessalonians 3:13

(KJV) But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

(NIV) And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.

2 Thessalonians 3:14

(KJV) And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

(NIV) Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed.

2 Thessalonians 3:15

(KJV) Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

(NIV) Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer.

You can see from these three verses that Paul advocates balance—of love, grace, and truth—as we exhort one another with Scripture.

2 Thessalonians 3:16

(KJV) Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.

(NIV) Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

Oh, the peace of Christ! This is perhaps the greatest gift that accompanies our salvation—as we abide in Him (John 15:10) through obedience to His Word, and as we learn to trust in Him more every day:

Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

2 Thessalonians 3:17

(KJV) The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

(NIV) I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.

To guard against false teachers or possible forgeries, Paul made a habit of uniquely signing his letters. He was a man of integrity and wanted to maintain the trust of his spiritual children.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: The last verse of 2 Thessalonians includes Paul's blessing of grace to the Thessalonians. What images or word pictures do you think of when you hear the word grace? Compare your perceptions to those you might think the persecuted Thessalonians imagined when Paul closed his letter this way.

2 Thessalonians 3:18

(KJV) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. The second epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Athens.

(NIV) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

And there it is—the grace that brought Paul to Jesus Christ. The grace that favoured the Thessalonian church amidst painful persecution. The grace that brings each man, woman, or child to be reconciled with God through the cross of Christ.

Ultimately, the grace—and truth—that ensures we each will be ready for the glorious return of our Lord Jesus!

Hallelujah!

~ Reverend Darren McClelland