

## 2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

The final section of 2 Thessalonians reminds the Thessalonian believers to in the truth revealed to them.

**3:1 – “Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.”**

- Paul asks for prayer for him and his ministry team. The prayer request involved two things:
  1. The Gospel – speed and belief.....or, concerning people who believe the message.
  2. Deliverance from evil men.....or, concerning people who do not believe the message.
- Prayer for Paul and his ministry work in spreading the message of Christ was needed for two reasons:
  1. Spread of the message - The rapid spread of the message of Christ
  2. Belief of the message - Hearts that would receive and honor the message of Christ.

**3:2 – “And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith.”**

- The second prayer request was for deliverance from those who did not believe and opposed Paul and his message.
- “wicked” is the word *atopon* which means “perverse.”
- “evil” is the word *poneron* which means “actively harmful.”
- In Acts 17:5-9, Paul and the Thessalonian church experience perverse and harmful reaction from the non-believers:
  - “But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd...These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here,...they are defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus...” – Acts 17:5-9

**3:3 – “But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”**

- Paul was confident that the Lord would respond and help them. Because:
  1. The Lord is “faithful”
- The Lord’s assistance would come in two forms:
  1. The Lord will “strengthen” the believers in Thessalonica as they continue to face the opposition of the unbelievers.
    - a. Timothy was sent to “strengthen” the Thessalonian’s hearts in 1 Thes.3:2,
      - i. “We sent Timothy...to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials...we were destined for them...we kept telling you that we would be persecuted.”
  2. The Lord will protect the believers in Thessalonica from the evil one.
- “The evil one” – is manifested in the “evil men” of verse 3:2 who do not have faith.
- Pray for “DELIVERANCE” in 3:2 which is manifested by the faithful Lord who provides:
  1. “STRENGTH” to continue and endure (3:3)
  2. “PROTECTION” from the evil one (3:3)

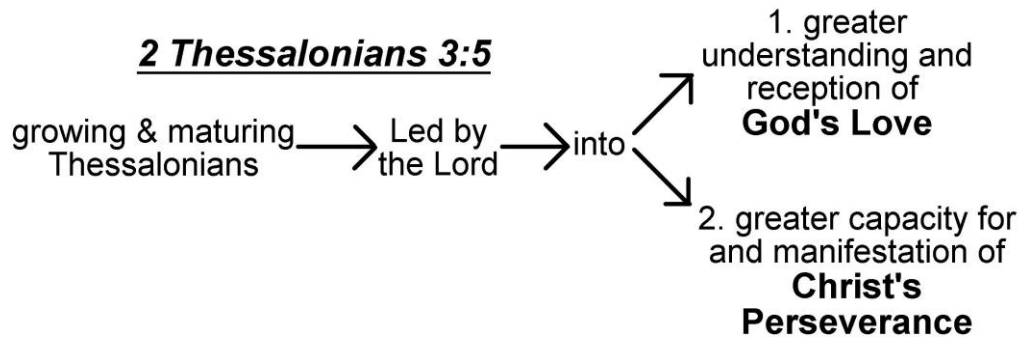


**3:4 – “We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command.”**

Part of Paul’s confidence that the Thessalonian believers would be delivered with strength and protection from the Lord is their own obedience to the Word.

**3:5 – “May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.”**

- Paul prays that the Thessalonians would be led or directed by the Lord into an ever increasing understanding and reception of “God’s Love” and “Christ’s Perseverance”



The mention of “Christ’s Perseverance” probably refers to both:

1. Endurance of persecution
2. Waiting for Christ’s return

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The Letter of Second Thessalonians deals with three issues:

1. Persecution (ch. 1)
2. Day of the Lord (ch. 2)
3. Lifestyle Error (ch. 3)

Here begins Paul’s correction of an error in the lifestyle of believers in Thessalonica.

Paul had urged the church to warn the idle in his first letter in 1 Thessalonians 5:14 –

“**We urge you**, brothers, **warn those who are idle**, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”

- The church was “urged”, not commanded.
- “warn”
- “idle” – ataktos – “without rank, out of rank, disorderly. The word was a military term used to refer to soldiers who is out o step or out of rank. It could refer to an entire army out of control and moving in disarray. It came out of the military to be used to refer to things out of order. Paul uses it here to refer to those who are “out of order” with society and are neglecting their natural duties of engaging in productive work/labor.

**3:6 – “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you ( or, “they”) received from us.”**

- Key phrases that set the tone of Paul’s correction:
  - “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” – this is a serious violation of character of Jesus and the nature of God.
  - “we command you” –
    - “we” indicates this is not Paul’s personal preference of a pet-peeve of Paul’s, but the entire ministry team is concerned about this deviant behavior of the Thessalonians.
    - “command” is not a suggestion, but a command to follow through on orders given by a higher command which is the Apostles and the Lord Jesus Christ (God, Savior, Messiah)
  - “keep away from” – is from “**stello**” (present middle infinitive = “**stellesthai**”)
    - Originally meant “to get ready” “to equip” an army for an expedition such as getting a ship ready for sailing.
    - Then it began to be used to say “bring together” or “to gather up” such as to separate something to a certain place for use or for protection

- This led to the use of this word as it is used by Paul here, which is “to gather in”, “to withdraw”, “to avoid”
- This same word is used in Romans 16:17 in reference to “Those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned.”
- “idle” – is “*atakeo*” (see above) meaning “to be out of rank, to be out of order, to be disorderly”
- “teaching”
- “brothers” – this is the seventh and final use of “brothers” in this letter
- “you” can be translated “they” so it says “that THEY received.”

**3:7 – “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you,…”**

“Yourselves” is emphatic! “You, you yourselves, you know this!

Just like they had forgotten his teaching on the Day of the Lord that he had repeatedly taught, they had forgotten his example of working every day with his hands to supply his own needs.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:6 the church was praised for having become imitators of Paul, his ministry team and the Lord:

“You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.”

The church had dealt with suffering and persecution, but they had not all understood the teaching and example of daily life.

The “teaching” or oral traditions, (like the Jewish doctrine and traditions) were not just theological concepts, but instructions and practices applied in everyday life and seen while interacting with the world.

Paul first begins with the negative: “We were NOT idle!” He then moves into the description of the positive example.

**3:8 – “...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.”**

- Paul worked in:
  - Thessalonica, 1 Thessalonians 2:9 and 4:11
  - Corinth, Acts 18:2-3
  - Ephesus, Acts 20:33-35
  - Overall ministry practice: “We work hard with our own hands.” – 1 Corinthians 4:12

**3:9 – “We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.”**

**3:10 – “For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘If a man will not work, he shall not eat.’ ”**

**3:11 – “We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busy-bodies.”**

Up until now Paul has been talking to the whole church ABOUT the idle.

Now Paul directly addresses the idle by talking TO the idle.

These people are not merely not working productively they are working at upsetting the peace and harmony of the church community by working at meddling. In other words people are either working to build or they are actively working to disassemble.

**3:12 – “Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.”**

**3:13 – “And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.”**

**3:14 – “If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed.”**

“Shame” was the form of discipline applied. In a culture where community and honor were important, this “idle” person was to have neither. March in line or get out.

**3:15 – “Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”**

The focus of the church behavior is restoration not punitive.

**3:16 – “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.”**

**3:17 – “I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.”**

Paul’s own penmanship and handwriting style could be seen in the original document at this point when he picked up the pen and signed off on this letter.

**3:18 – “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”**

Typical letters ending at this time used the standard good-bye phrase “erroso” (meaning “be strong”).

But, Paul signed off with “Grace of our Lord be with you” instead of “You be strong.”

Our salvation, strength, hope and future are in the Grace of Jesus, not in the strength of our own plans and efforts.