

“Foiling the Plans of the Evil One”

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Theme: Faithfulness by God and to God is the key to overcoming the “evil one.”

I. HE IS FOILED BY OUR PRAYERS - 3:1-2

A. Pray for the Power of God’s Word - v. 1

1. Having completed the specific corrections of their eschatological errors regarding the Day of the Lord, Paul addresses the ongoing need they possess to remain faithful to the Lord.
2. One of the key aspects of perseverance of the saints is the ability to overcome the efforts of the “evil one” to draw us away from the simplicity of faith in the sufficiency of Christ.
3. He begins by saying *“Finally, brethren ...”* a reference to a transition to the final matters under consideration as he draws his epistle to a close.
4. This first matter focuses on prayer - *“pray for us...”* - since Paul was the means by which the *“word of the Lord”* was being delivered, it was necessary that they pray for Him.
5. He sees two prayer requests as essential – *“...that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified ...”*
6. *“pray”* [προσεύχεσθε] - is a present middle imperative - emphasizing that they were under a constant obligation to look to God that the ministry of God’s Word would do two things:
 - a) *“spread rapidly”* - [τρέχει] - means to run or advance through exertion; to proceed quickly without restraint or interference.
 - b) *“... be glorified”* - [τρέχει] - refers to influence other’s perception of another’s reputation; to cause others to extol to comprehend the weight or significance of someone or something.
7. Paul then adds - *“... just as it did also with you”* - the preaching of the gospel at Thessalonica had produced rapid and powerful results - cp. **1 Thessalonians 1:5, 8; 2:13.**

B. Pray for the Protection in God’s Will - v. 2

1. The first request was for the success of the Message and now he focuses on the safety of the messengers as he asks that the saints in Thessalonica pray *“... that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men ...”*

2. This prayer focuses not on a selfish desire for ease, but for the preservation of their ability to proclaim the Gospel.
3. **“rescued”** [ρύομαι] – (Aor. Pass.Subj) has a specific reference to a particular danger they were facing – and it was uncertain whether God would be willing to deliver them.
4. There are two characteristics of those who were imperilling them: **“... from perverse and evil men”**
 - a) **“perverse”** [ἄτοπος] – “out of ordinary” – having behavior that is extraordinarily “out of place” – describing obsessive resistance that causes a man to obsessively exert himself. **(Conduct)**
 - b) **“evil men”** [πονηρῶν ἀνθρώπων] – “morally worthless” – not promoting the welfare of himself or those around him; a moral malignancy. **(Character)**
5. It is possible that believers assume that since they responded to the Word of God with reverence, that others will do the same.
6. However, Paul corrects this false assumption by saying: **“for not all have faith”** – in fact, many are hostile to the Gospel as they are held captive by “the evil one” to do his will – cp. **2 Timothy 2:24-26**.

II. HE IS FOILED BY GOD’S PROVIDENCE - 3:3

A. The Faithfulness of God’s Power

1. The reason for the importance of prayer is that we are unable to resist the **“evil one”** on our own but we are dependent upon the power of God – **“But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen ... you ...”**
2. This is a focus upon the internal impact of God’s work in our lives.
3. Elsewhere God makes it clear that God’s faithfulness to us is key to our ability to overcome Satan – cp. **1 John 4:4; Romans 8:31**.
4. God’s faithfulness is clearly upon what we constantly rely – cp. **1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:24**.

B. The Faithfulness of God’s Protection

1. It is in this way, that **“He will ... protect you from the evil one.”**
2. This term is a focus on the external dangers that threaten to assault us and separate us from the faithfulness of Christ.

3. **“protect”** [φυλάξει] - to guard or to watch over in order to interfere with a threat.
4. This is connected to the previous section where the saints are exhorted to pray for the impact of God’s Word and our faith in it which also serves as the shield of protection from the assaults of Satan - cp. ***Ephesians 6:16***.
5. It is in our deliberate reliance upon the Lord and His Word that enables us to remain victorious over our enemy.

III. HE IS FOILED BY OUR PRIORITIES - 3:4-5

A. The Priority of Deference - v. 4

1. This brings Paul to provide the priorities that we must maintain through God’s grace, enabling us to remain faithful to Him.
2. Paul declares: **“We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command.”**
3. Our continued obedience to God and His Word (delivered through the Apostles in the inspired text of Scripture) that we find security and stability.
4. Such a pattern of obedience - deferring to the will of God instead of our own thoughts - provides us the ability to have clarity of priority and obligation before the Lord.
5. God’s commands are given to us to enable us to navigate through all of the intricacies introduced to our lives by our flesh, the world and Satan Himself.
6. We are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against a variety of ploys, spirits, and schemes designed to lure us into traps and defile us - ***2 Corinthians 10:3-5***.

B. The Priority of Devotion - v. 5

1. Satan’s entire *modus operandi* is to draw us away from our love for God - casting doubt upon His goodness and grace.
2. Hence, Paul aspires that God would keep our heart fixed on Him - **“May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.”**
3. **“Direct”** [κατευθύναι] - describes the act of “making straight” or unincumbered with twists, turns, and obstacles - cp. ***1 Thessalonians 3:11***.

4. The notion here is that all of the resistance that the “evil one” would produce would be cared for by the Lord - enabling them to find two characteristics:
 - a) “... *the love of God*” - this could be objective (God’s love for the believer) or subjective (the believers love for God) - it is left nebulous given the reciprocal nature of love.
 - b) “... *the steadfastness of Christ*” - a reference to the absolute tenacity in one’s relationship with God despite circumstances and experiences - cp. **Hebrews 12:2-3; 1 Peter 2:21-23**.
5. The idea here is that God would draw us ever closer to God and our satisfaction with Christ - the opposite of what Satan seeks to accomplish - cp. **James 4:6-10**.
 - a) “Resist” [ἀνθίστημι] - comes from a word that emphasizes taking a stand against - that is, stand against the schemes of the devil - cp. **Ephesians 6:11**.
 - b) The essence of Satan’s schemes is to draw us away from reliance on God and satisfaction with Christ - hence, to “resist” him is to do the opposite - to “draw near to God.”

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overcoming the “evil one.”**