

2 Thessalonians 3:1-18

Verse 1

Finally, brethren, pray for us –

-That the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you.

Verse 2

-And that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.

Paul was fully aware of Satan's schemes (2 Cor. 2:11, 11:14, Eph. 4:14, 6:11).

Verse 3

But the Lord is faithful and He will:

*-Strengthen = *sterizo* – To make stable, to confirm one's mind.*

-And protect you – To guard or keep watch over.

From the evil one – Literally "from the evil". Notice this same phrase in Matthew 6:13 and Ephesians 6:16.

Verse 4

What we command – To give charge. It refers to a military order passed down from a superior officer.

Verse 5

And may the Lord direct your hearts:

*-Into the love of God – The love of God is a major motivation for being obedient to His commands. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."
John 14:15*

-Into the steadfastness of Christ – A patient enduring or perseverance.

Meditation on the love of God and the patient endurance of Christ motivates us to obey His Word and to endure trials patiently.

Verse 6

We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – Using the Lord's full name adds weight to Paul's command. We should live in light of all we know about the person of Christ.

*Keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us – The word *unruly* is used in the N.T. only here and in verse 11. It is used elsewhere of soldiers who are out of ranks or people who do not show up for work.*

Not according to the tradition which you received from us – Tradition is defined as "the substance of a teaching which is given either orally or in writing".

Verse 7

You ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you – Undisciplined is the verb form of the word translated "unruly" in verse 6. Paul's example was in line with his teaching.

Verse 8

Nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it – Paul reminds them that he worked and ministered to them when he was there so that he would not be a financial burden to them. Paul's trade was tent-making (Acts 18:1-3) and wherever he ministered he worked, if possible, so that he would not be a burden on the church and so that no one could accuse him of being in ministry for the money.

Verse 9

Not because we do not have the right to this – As an apostle and traveling minister he had the right to ask for monetary support. Paul spoke often on the proper attitude toward money and the ministry. His long defense of this subject is in 1 Corinthians 9:1-27. Note also 2 Corinthians 11:7-11 and 1 Timothy 5:17-18,

A model...that you might follow our example – Learning to sacrifice because we love the Lord and because it will help others is strengthened by a Godly example.

Verse 10

We used to give you this order: if anyone will not work neither let him eat – Notice Paul says “will not work”, not “cannot work”. Work was part of God’s design for us before the fall, before sin entered the world (Genesis 2:15). Sin turned work into labor and toil (Genesis 3:17-19) but did not negate our need to work. We need work for the fulfillment of all that God intends us to be. A willing refusal to work, when you are able, is a spiritual problem.

Verse 11

Some among you are leading an undisciplined life doing no work at all – Most likely this was occurring because of their misunderstanding of the imminent return of Christ. There is a difference between imminent and immediate. His return is imminent but no one knows if it is immediate.

But acting like busybodies – The irony is that when someone is *idle* they often become *busy* in what they should not be doing. *Busybody* = To be busy with needless, useless matters. To be concerned with other’s affairs.

Verse 12

Command...exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ – The strongest way Paul could say it!

Work in quiet fashion – This probably sheds some light on how they were behaving as “busybodies”. This is the opposite of an “undisciplined life”.

Eat their own bread – Because they did not work, they had no income, and thus had to rely on others to eat. Paul is saying, “get a job and quit mooching off others.”

Chiastic structure in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

A (3:6a) Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

B (3:6b) that you withdraw from every brother who is leading a disorderly life

C (3:6c) and not according to the tradition which they received from us.

D (3:7a) For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example,

E (3:7b) because we did not act in a disorderly manner among you,

F (3:8a) nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it,

F' (3:8b) but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day

E' (3:8c) so that we might not be a burden to any of you;

D' (3:9) not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example.

C' (3:10) For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat.

B' (3:11) For we hear that some among you are leading a disorderly life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.

A' (3:12) Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.
(From Chuck Bumgardner)

Verse 13

But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good - We are encouraged to work and provide for the needs of our families even if we feel the rapture is near. Paul makes a similar statement in Galatians 6:9 in the context of faithful investment in spiritual things (sowing to the Spirit). The imminent return of Christ should motivate us to live every day to its fullest.

Verse 14

*But if anyone does not obey our instruction...
Take special note of that man
Do not associate with him
That he may be put to shame*

Verse 15

And yet, do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother - We denounce and condemn enemies. We warn brothers. The purpose of church discipline is always to bring the person to repentance and restoration! As Paul points out in Galatians 6:1, attitude is very important.

Verses 16-18 Concluding Remarks

The Lord of peace...grant you peace in every circumstance- Paul gives the formula for realizing the peace of God in Philippians 4:4-7. Jesus promises us peace in John 14:27.

The Lord be with you all - Paul desires that they all have a close walk with the Lord.

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand... Verse 2 of this chapter hints that they had received a letter in which Paul's name was forged.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all - Paul ends every one of his letters with this wish. This statement is identical to his closing statement in 1 Thessalonians 5:28 except that he adds the word "all". This is probably an appeal to unity in the church through the obedience to his commands.