

The Return of the King: Lesson 5

2 Thessalonians 3

Verses 1-2

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.

In verses 1-2 Paul and his companions ask for prayer from the Thessalonians for two things:

1. That the gospel speed ahead and be honored.
 - a. Speed ahead- that it would **progress** through the Roman Empire very quickly. The words speed ahead in Greek refer to **running**.
 - b. Honored- refers to being embraced just like how they received it.
2. Deliverance from enemies of the gospel.
 - a. The opponents of Christianity would try to stop the gospel message.
 - b. Wicked- refers to being **twisted** and perverse.
 - c. Evil- actively **harmful**.

These two verses show the positive and negative reactions that preaching the gospel can have.

Verse 3

But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.

The Lord is faithful- God always does what he has **promised**. Paul is confident that God will keep working in this church. Also, God will guard them against Satan. Satan is a threat to all churches and the way we overcome him is by **prayer** and the **Word**.

Verses 4-5

And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

Paul shows his confidence in the church in Thessalonica. They are **obedient** now and he is confident they will be in the future.

Paul also reminds them of God's love for them and the **endurance** of Jesus when he went through his suffering.

Addressing a Problem:

Verse 6

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.

The first thing we see is that this is a very strong command. It was not only a command from Paul but a command made in the name of the Lord.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul told them to warn the unruly, but apparently, it was still going on (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

The problem remained, so Paul now tells them to **discipline** the one who was being disobedient.

The purpose of keeping away was not so much punishment but more to deny these folks who were disobedient the **aid** and **comfort** of the fellowship of the church so that they would repent of their disobedience.

Paul also is showing us that the church was a place **of love** and **comfort** and that someone who would be banned from the church would feel very sad and sorry not to be a part of it.

The question is what was this disobedience all about? The problem was *idleness* (not working). Some believe that this was because they thought Jesus was coming back very quickly- so why did they need a job?

These people who were not working were involved in **gossip** and being **busybodies**. They were also living off other people and the church.

There might be another reason they were not working. Pagan philosophers that traveled around did not work and promoted an **avoidance** of work, especially manual labor. Scriptures have long recognized a sinful human pull to be slothful (Proverbs 12:24-27, 19:15, 31:27; Titus 1:12).

This seems to be the reason some were not working.

Verses 7-9

For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.

In contrast to the idlers, Paul reminds the Thessalonians how he and his team **worked** to provide for themselves.

Paul wanted to be a good example of working hard and earning one's own living. Paul did not want to be a burden. Also, he wanted to distinguish their ministry's conduct from that of **pagan** teachers and philosophers who **traveled** around living off other people.

Verse 10

For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

Paul says that if anyone will not work (who can) they should not receive food from the church. Paul is **not** saying to not give food to those in need **but** he is speaking of those who can **work** but won't.

We need to remember that God has chosen to meet **most** of our needs through work.

Verses 11-12

For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. 12Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

Paul and his companions had received reports that not only are these people who are idle a **drain** on the church but such refusal to work led to **improper** behavior- they had become busybodies. The Greek word used here means "intrusively engages in the activities of others." This behavior leads to gossip, criticism, and disharmony in the church.

Paul commands these busybodies to get out of other people's business and work and take care of their own **needs** instead of expecting others to take care of them.

Verse 13

As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.

Few things are more discouraging than seeing others take **advantage** of Christian generosity. But we cannot let the bad behavior of some **discourage** us from doing good to those truly in need.

Verses 14-15

If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. 15Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

Paul finished his thoughts on 2 Thessalonians 3:6 and tells the Thessalonians what it means to withdraw from a brother as mentioned previously.

They are to disassociate from the disobedient person. This does not mean that person is an enemy nor to disavow the person as a believer.

Two reasons for taking such action:

1. So that believer will **repent** and come back to the church.
2. Seeking the welfare of the church in society.
3. Keeping other members from being **tempted** to disobedience.

Verse 16

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

A Christian and a church enjoy **peace** when they are in the will of God, whether they are going through persecution or good times. Paul's prayer is that they would enjoy God's peace.

Verse 17

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.

Back in the day, it was very common to write letters and correspondence with the help of a secretary or amanuensis who was trained in penmanship and Greek (Romans 16:22). Paul in this closing writes some of it in his own **handwriting** to show this letter was from him (1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18; Philemon 19).

Verse 18

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

For Paul, God's **grace** was the beginning and the end of the Christian life.

There is a one-word addition to his final benediction and that word is all. Paul shows his great love and heart for even those who he had **corrected**.