

2Th. 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free course*, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you:

2Th. 3:2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all *men* have not faith.

As Paul begins to close this letter, he asks for prayer for him, Silas and Timothy. The phrase “may have free course” is represented by one word in the Greek, which means “to run or walk hastily.” Paul, like any preacher, wants to see immediate results in the teaching of God’s word. For the word to be glorified or honored would mean that it is being readily received by the people. Paul compares his request to one of desire that the word of the Lord would produce results in other cities that were comparable to the response in Thessalonica.

Paul and his coworkers were evidently getting opposed and harassed by men who were determined to prevent other people from hearing the good news and accepting Christ as Savior using whatever means necessary—even if it resulted in physical harm to those involved.

Paul has a basic black and white viewpoint (which I have been accused of more often than not). The wickedness of men is prevalent among those who do not accept Christ. Men of faith would never choose to force their views upon others by causing physical harm. That mindset certainly casts a terrible shadow on much of church history. I personally believe there has been much done by many throughout history who profess faith in God that belies a true faith. Thankfully, that judgment will be made by Jesus, the Righteous Judge, whose judgment can never be questioned.

John 5:22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

Psa. 96:13 Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

2Th. 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep *you* from evil.

This verse starts with a very important truth—The Lord is completely trustworthy. We never have to wonder if He will keep His word, that there is a chance that He might possibly forget, that He will change His character. He never changes; He is always the same.

Mal. 3:6 For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Heb. 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Because of God’s faithfulness, the believer can be confident that:

- God will stablish you. – The Greek for *stablish* states “to set fast, i.e. (literally) to turn resolutely in a certain direction.” This is just another of many statements that affirm to me the security of the believer. It is God’s work in us that keeps us secure; we have nothing to do with the work of salvation. Our only participation in the work of salvation is to accept the gift by responding in faith and repentance to the provision God has made for us through His Son.

- God will keep you from evil. – The Greek for evil states “hurtful, i.e. evil (properly, in effect or influence, and thus differing from 2556, which refers rather to essential character, as well as from 4550, which indicates degeneracy from original virtue).” This phrase made me stop and really think. We know that Christians sin. We know that Christians have “evil” things happen to them. I think the key is found in the Greek. God will protect His children from the hurtful effects or influence of the forces of evil. When the child of God sins, he/she is blessed with a convicting conscience through the Holy Spirit; he/she will experience chastening from the Lord as a result of that sin.

Heb. 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

When the child of God is physically harmed by evil forces, the scripture tells us that that experience will result in “good” according to God’s word.

Rom. 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

When we become a child of God, we are made the “righteousness of God in Christ.”

2Cor. 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

God will not allow the character of His child to degenerate so as to be devoid of that righteousness. I know that there will be some who will not agree with me on that point, but I believe the scripture supports its truth. The believer may fall down along the way in his/her walk, but never beyond the point of rescue and recovery. Scripture is clear that our works and our continuance in the faith are proofs of that faith.

James 2:17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

1John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Scripture is full of examples of the failures of men of faith and of their response to the Lord in repentance and restoration. I don’t know of one example in scripture that depicts a person of faith showing an eventual total rejection of that faith. Even Saul and Lot, who are the closest examples I can think of I believe died as men of faith. When Saul visited the witch of Endor and was allowed to speak with Samuel (who was already in Paradise, the temporary place of abode of people of faith before the resurrection and ascension of Jesus), Samuel told Saul, “to morrow shalt thou and thy sons *be with* me.” (1Samuel 28:19) Even though we aren’t told of the evidence, scripture states clearly that Lot was a righteous man.

2Pet. 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

2Pet. 2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;)

2Th. 3:4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

Paul was convinced that the Thessalonian believers would keep on living according to the truth of God's word in which they had been instructed. His confidence was not in the people themselves, but (based on the above verse) was based on the truth of God's working in them through the Holy Spirit.

2Th. 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Even as Paul is sure of the position of the believers in Christ, his prayer is that they will be guided into actions that show the love of God and that reflect a cheerful spirit as they wait on Christ's return to take them home. Paul reflects the heart of a true brother or sister. He wants to see these brothers and sisters in the faith continue to grow in that faith and experience the fullness of that faith.

2Th. 3:6 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.

Paul identifies this next statement as a command authorized by the Lord Jesus Christ. The believers are instructed to "abstain from associating with" (from the Greek for *withdraw*) a brother or sister that acts *disorderly* (not according to proper morals, insubordinate). Most of the translations insert the idea of idleness with walking disorderly. This doesn't come from the Greek for this word, but is a correct thought from the context of the following verses. The word for *tradition* is a reference to "precept" or "command regarding moral conduct" as used in chapter 2, verse 15.

2Th. 3:7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

2Th. 3:8 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:

Again, Paul is not afraid to declare himself, Silas and Timothy as examples worthy of imitating. They had set an example of hard work to support themselves even as they ministered at Thessalonica. They did not depend on the support of others.

2Th. 3:9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

As ministers of the gospel, Paul states that the privilege of support was proper for them to expect, but they were more concerned with setting the right example before the new believers than in benefiting from their position. I believe that heart is sadly lacking in many ministries today. In fact, I am afraid that many people today go into the ministry as a means to an end rather than as a response to the call of God.

2Th. 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

2Th. 3:11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

Evidently, the tendency to laziness was evident in the community of believers even when Paul was first among them. It had required a special instruction that those who did not contribute to the work should not be allowed to eat. This seems an odd command to have to make to me. Were the people willingly supporting those who refused to support themselves and continually meddled in other people's business? Frankly, when I looked up the Greek, I expected to see some reference to their partaking of the Lord's Supper or special feast days or something; but there was no specific reference. Those are group settings in which it would be easier for "lazy" brothers and sisters to take advantage of the efforts of others. I can't imagine showing up at another brother or sister's home expecting to be fed just because I am part of the family. Evidently, there were some such people in the community of believers at Thessalonica.

Some commentators try to explain the idleness of these people as a response to expecting the return of the Lord at any moment. Jesus presented a specific teaching in response to the thoughts of His followers that the kingdom of God would soon appear. The thrust of the teaching was that we are to be busy with the work at hand until He comes.

Luke 19:11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

Luke 19:12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

Luke 19:13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

2Th. 3:12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

"them that are such" = those who are disorderly (lazy, idle) and busybodies (meddling in other people's business)

Paul is commanding and imploring on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ the believers who fall into the above category to get busy and provide for their own needs. It would seem that Paul is stating a command from the Lord and adding the thought of pleading with them as a fellow believer. The instruction to work in quietness is a direct rebuke to being busybodies.

2Th. 3:13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

Every time I read this verse I'm looking for the rest of it as stated in Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Gal. 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

The context of the instruction to the Galatians was a bit different; Paul was addressing the benefits that would result from spiritual activities vs. fleshly activities. The context of this passage is the natural responsibility to provide for one's personal needs. We are not to neglect the responsibilities of this life. The obvious consequence should be that you will suffer because of your own neglect or inaction.

2Th. 3:14 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.

2Th. 3:15 Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

Paul now instructs that any person who does not heed the instructions given in this letter should be “noted”; the Greek indicates “marked for avoidance.” The reason for avoiding fellowship with that person is to make him realize his wrongdoing in hopes that he will respond with repentance and right action. The purpose isn’t to brand that brother or sister as an enemy, but to gently reprove someone you care about.

2Th. 3:16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord *be* with you all.

As usual, Paul closes by pronouncing a blessing of God’s peace upon the church at Thessalonica. This blessing is worded such as to recognize the Lord as the source of peace. His peace is to be desired at all times and can be shared with His people in many ways. The peace of God is always available to the child of God according to His word. This gives me another opportunity to use my life verse.

Is. 26:3 Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose* mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

The key to possessing the peace of God is to keep your heart focused on God—to keep Him at the center of everything you do. The Greek references “quietness” and “rest” regarding *peace*. This is a good description of the spirit within us when we are focused on God’s faithfulness and trustworthiness in spite of the turmoil or trouble that may surround us.

2Th. 3:17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

Paul affirms that this letter is from him by signing it personally. He declares that this will always be true of any letter that is written by him. (This would seem to refute the possibility of Paul as the author of Hebrews unless it was written prior to this practice.)

2Th. 3:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

The second *epistle* to the Thessalonians was written from Athens.

Also as usual, Paul pronounces a blessing for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with this church. All believers desire the continued blessing of God’s unmerited favor. It is God’s grace that keeps us from giving up and motivates us to try and try again. As I was looking for a fresh thought in association with God’s grace, I did a word search and found this verse in the Psalms.

Psa. 84:11 For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

God’s grace is connected to everything that is *good* in the lives of His children, and He has promised to withhold nothing good from those of His children who walk *uprightly* (according to His truth).