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**May the Lord of Peace Himself Give You Peace at all Times in Every Way**

**II Thessalonians 3:1-18 (Lesson #4)**

**Last week:**

***2:16*** *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace,* ***17*** *comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.*

***3:1 Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, 2 and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.***

**Vs 1 –** ***Brothers, Pray for us***

Paul and his companions have been praying for the Thessalonian believers.

Here, Paul asks that they pray for them. He does this a few other places (Rom 15:30-32; IICor 1:9-11; Eph 6:17-21; Phil 1:15-20; Col 4:3-4).

**Vs 1a –** **#1** – Paul’s requested three-pronged prayer.

1. That the ***word of the Lord may speed ahead***

The verb literally pictures the ***word of the Lord***, running in a race, we should see the ***word of the Lord*** as both strong and active.

It is interesting, he does not say the word of God, but the word of the Lord. Again, constant reminders that Jesus is very God.

We have a similar word picture of the **word of God** given to us by the writer of Hebrews:

*“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Heb 4:12 ESV)*

Paul is asking that they would pray for him, that he could open his mouth, and let the ***word of Lord*** run, powerfully.

1. **#2 *and*** (that it, word of the Lord***) would be honored, as it happened among you!***

Not only that it would rapidly propagate, but that it would be honored. This is the Greek word for **glory**, **glorified**, **honored**, or **magnified**. It is the Greek word **δοξάζω** (dox-ad’-zo).

**He would proclaim it, it would run in power, and men and women would believe it, thus honoring it and glorifying it!**

Putting this in context, Paul has reminded them of the work of the Holy Spirit (the third person of the God-Head) in their lives:

*“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,” (2Th 2:13 NKJV)*

There he praised God for the work of the Spirit in their lives (sanctification) with a specific focus on them believing in the truth!

**Just like you honored the gospel when you heard and believed, pray that it would spread and men and women, like you did, empowered by the Holy Spirit would honor the word!**

 **Vs 2 -** **#3**, we see the third part of Paul’s request for prayer… Namely, ***that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.***

Paul has complimented them on their steadfastness amidst persecution. He has praised God for their steadfastness in persecution.

Now he asks that they pray for him and fellow members of the missionary work **(we) might be delivered from wicked and evil men.**

The repetition of wicked and evil is worth noting. The word translated wicked is the word **ἄτοπος** (at’-op-os). Other translations choose words like **“unreasonable”**, **“bad”**, or **“bigoted”**.

Paul may be saying these are unreasonable and evil people. Paul is asking that they pray for God to deliver the missionary team from persecutions that lie in front of them, as He has already faithfully delivered them from so many that now lie behind them!

Please keep in mind I and II Thessalonians are among Paul’s earliest letters. The only letter that is given an earlier date is Galatians. Paul and his colleagues, have a great deal of persecution that (at the time when Paul wrote this) lies in front of them.

**Listen to what Paul says in II Corinthians chapter 11, this would have been only 5 or 6 years after II Thessalonians (55-56 AD):**

*“****23b …****with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.* ***24*** *Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.* ***25*** *Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea;* ***26*** *on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers;* ***27*** *in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.* ***28*** *And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.” (2Co 11:22-28 ESV)*

**Vs 3 - *But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.***

**Isn’t it funny, Paul never focused on the bad, even when it was really bad!**

Paul acknowledged bad, but then was able to quickly focus on the good.

The conjunction ***but***, Paul is drawing a **strong contrast**. They are bad, BUT the **Lord** (you know the Greek word) is **faithful**. **He is trustworthy**, **He acts faithfully**.

**Vs 2b into 3a** – Word play in the Greek. For not all have faith **πίστις** (pis’-tis), but the Lord is faithful **πιστός** (pis-tos’).

He will… **establish**. The Greek word is **στηρίζω** (stay-rid’-zo). It means to **make stable**, to **establish**, to **fix**, to **cause to stand firm**!

*“****16*** *¶ Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace,* ***17*** *comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.” (2Th 2:16-17 ESV)*

God will establish them and us, He will cause them and us to stand.

But equally, God will guard them and us, the Greek word is **φυλάσσω** (foo-las’-so). It means to **guard**, to **keep watch over**, **to keep in such a matter as to ensure no harm**.

God will **establish** you (cause you to stand) and God will ***guard*** you against and from the ***Evil One.***

*“10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” (Eph 6:10-12 ESV)*

**Vs 4 -** Notice, Paul reassures the believers that he has ***confidence*** in the Lord, **about them.**

That they are both doing and will continue to do the things that Paul commands.

Jesus, spoke with his own authority. Paul is here speaking with the authority of one of the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The same is true for you and I. I know God is at work in your life. I know he will bring about faithfulness to His word.

**Vs 5** - May the Lord, guide your hears into a deeper understanding of God’s love.

May the Lord, through the word and through the Spirit, direct, remove all the hindrances and make a clear and straight path for you to understand the love of God

As well as the **patience**, **steadfastness**, the **unswerving nature of Jesus! This is fidelity in the midst of adversity!**

**It is in experiencing and knowing God’s love that we are enabled to love like God. It is in knowing and understanding the steadfastness of Christ that we can be steadfast to Him! He serves as the example of steadfastness!**

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***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. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, 8 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. 9 It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. 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. 11 For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.***

Now the length of this section, highlights the importance. Paul had touched upon this issue in I Thessalonians, but it seems, the desired outcome had not occurred.

 *“****9*** *¶ Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,* ***10*** *for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more,* ***11*** *and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you,” (1Th 4:9-11 ESV)*

It is safe to assume that either because of the false teaching that they were in the ***day of the Lord*** or just laziness, some believers in Thessalonica were not working, who were able to work.

Clearly, this verse takes on a very authoritative mood and highlights what the apostle sees as a VERY SERIOUS issue.

**Brothers…** Brothers and sisters.

We command you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Keep away. The Greek word translated **keep away** is the Greek word **στέλλω** (stel’-lo). It means to **avoid**, to **withdraw from oneself**, or **to remove from oneself**.

***Any brother*** who is ***walking in idleness*** – So this involves brothers, who are able to work, work is available, but they are choosing not to work and live off others.

***Idleness*** - The Greek word is **ἀτακτέω** (at-ak-teh’-o), it is a military term that means to **step out of ran**k, it brings with it the idea of conduct or behavior that is **out of place**. It us **unruly**, it is **disorderly**, it is **irresponsible**.

Keep away, from a brother walking in idleness, disorderly, irresponsible. The idea seems to be to **remove them from the fellowship**.

This disorderly conduct is not in accord with the traditions which you received from us. Again, Paul is reminding them it is not in accord with what we taught you.

What Paul is doing, in this very **specific example** (one or more brothers who should be working but are choosing to attempt to live off others) is exactly what Jesus taught through a **general principle**.

*“****15*** *¶ "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.* ***16*** *But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.* ***17*** *If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” (Mt 18:15-17 ESV)*

**I would like to provide eight points about what Jesus said:**

1. Although he says against you, we must never forget that all sin is against God.
2. Because a little leaven leavens the whole lump, sin against God is also sin against His body.
3. Go and go alone, no gossiping, approach it one on one.
4. When we go to a brother, who has sinned or is in sin, the goal is always reconciliation.
5. We need to use discretion here. We need to recognize that we are all growing in grace. To confront something is one thing, to bring it to the church is another level al together.
6. There is nothing wrong with repeating a step.
7. We should never be looking for sins in others, we should be looking for sins in our hearts and lives.
8. The idea Jesus had, was to remove from the fellowship. That is likely the same idea that Paul has.

**\*\* Summary, we need to look out for one another! \*\* In Love! Sometimes that means asking hard questions, other times that means taking hard steps.**

**In all cases we should do so in love and show grace.**

Take the steps that Jesus outlined…

1. Go to them.
2. Allow grace to work
3. Maybe go again.
4. Take 2 or 3
5. Turn over to the church for removal from the membership/fellowship.
6. A point that will come up in a minute, but we need to discuss here. **Treat them not as an enemy, but as a bother.**
7. The goal is repentance and reconciliation.
8. ***Keeping away***, removing from fellowship is NOT REJECTION.

We have the word of God, which outlines how we should live. Let’s endeavor to live in accord with the traditions delivered to us through the scriptures!

**Vs 7-9** - Here Paul seems to be saying I should not even have to write this.

**You know** that you are to **imitate** us, the missionary team (Paul, Silus, Timothy, and Luke) at a minimum.

**You know** that **we were not idle** when we were there. **You know**, we **did not eat anyone’s food**, that we did not pay for.**You know**, with toil and labor, we worked (night and day), so that we should **not be a burden to you**.

The idea of ***toil and labor*** is hard work, it is **exhausting efforts** and **labor**. Paul is saying you saw how we toiled and labored among you!

**The reason we did so was not to be a burden to you**.

Now, another truth, that I would be remiss if I did not highlight here to prevent us from drawing a wrong conclusion is, that those who minister the gospel (our pastoral staff as an example) should live off the gospel.

*“In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.” (1Co 9:14 ESV)*

**Vs 9 –** But here, Paul is reminding them, of how they lived in such a way, as to serve as an example, and these idle brothers are not following that example!

They had a right to demand to be taken care of by the church. They thought it more important to serve as examples, rather than to get what was rightly theirs.

Here is how Paul expressed it to the church in Corinth:

*“For we are not, like so many, peddlers* (make money through selling) *of God’s word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.” (2Co 2:17 ESV)*

**For a lengthy discussion of the why Paul paid his own way while sharing the gospel see (ICor 9:3-15).**

**Vs 10 –** But it is even more than this: This appears to be a proverb (origin unknown) that Paul taught the believers. But do not miss the point. **This proverb only applies to those who are able to work, work is available to secure, but they choose to live off others.** Then and only then does this proverb apply!

When we were with you, we gave you this **command**. This is bigger than not following our example, which these brothers are not, and you are not attempting to hold them accountable.

**Vs 11 -** Notice the construction. There are some who are “walking in idleness” as it relates to work. But they are busybodies.

They seem to be quite busy with other things, yet idle when it comes to work.

Notice the oxymoron. They are idle… busybodies!

**Vs 12** - Here Paul is clear, we command and encourage. You are familiar with the Greek word translated encourage, it is the Greek word **παρακαλέω** (par-ak-al-eh’-o). It is the idea of **beseeching**, **asking**, **admonishing**, or **entreating**.

Work with your hands, do so in quietness. The idea is not meddling in the affairs of others.

**We encourage you, we beseech you, we entreat you, we really plead and beg you to do what it is right in the Lord.**

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***13 As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. 14 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. 15 Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. 16 ¶ Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. The Lord be with you all. 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. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.***

Here in these last 6 verses as Paul wraps up this short letter with some final recommendations. Here we come across some amazing nuggets.

**Vs 13** - **#1** in the closing. **Do good and do not grow tired of doing good.**

You and I must do good and not grow weary in well-doing.

**Here Paul is encouraging those who were doing the right things to keep doing them!**

*“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.” (Heb 12:3 ESV)*

*“****9*** *And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.* ***10*** *So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (Ga 6:9-10 ESV)*

**Vs 14-15** **- #2** - **Disobedience with what the apostle taught, should result in disassociation of those who will not obey the truth.**

**REMINDER…** Disassociation always has as its goal, repentance, and restoration. We must always operate with grace, discretion, and compassion.

Now, we do not treat them as an enemy, but rather warning as a brother.

**Vs 16** - **#3**, **the available peace.**

May the **Lord of Peace**… It is not just that God loves peace, desires peace, or has given us peace with him when we placed faith in Jesus Christ.

**God is peace.** **Peace is one of the principal attributes of God.** **Jesus is the Lord of Peace.**

**κύριος** (koo’-ree-os) Lord, master, or sovereign.

**εἰρήνη** (i-ray’-nay) peace, tranquility, security, safety, or prosperity.

Peace, real peace, not a placebo or sugar pill is only found in the ***Lord of Peace***.

Now let me be honest with you. In America, now more than ever men, women, boys, and girls are suffering from various forms of anxiety. The one thing people are desperately looking for is peace.

The believers in Thessalonica are suffering severe persecution, their family and Christian friends are suffering severe persecution, their children are suffering persecution.

**Depression and anxiety are no doubt running very high!**

Here Paul is reminding them and us that real peace, peace that can not only survive life’s storms, but peace (**εἰρήνη**) that can thrive in life’s storms is available to us from the ***Lord of peace himself.***

Now if you are a believer, you are already enjoying peace with God. The Bible teaches that you were an enemy, you were alienated, you were separated, but the offering of Jesus Christ, the blood of Jesus Christ has ended that hostility, when you placed faith in Jesus Christ.

We were enemies, and now we are at peace with God. But Paul is talking about even more than that. Notice what Paul says: ***Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way***.

Here Paul is praying that the **“lord of Peace Himself”** The master of peace, the one who is indeed peace, that he would give them peace, at all times, and in every way.

**That is what they needed, that is what you and I needed. We need peace at all times and in every way.**

**Now how big of a theme is “peace” in the New Testament? Almost every single book (outside the gospels) opens with the idea that we have received peace from God!**

What Paul is praying is that the Lord of Peace will bring peace into every situation, every circumstance, every moment of our lives!

**Vs 16b - #4 -** They needed, and we need the abiding direction and supervision of the Lord, as ministered to us by the Holy Spirit.

The Lord, be with all of you. In the good times, in the bad times, and even in times of persecution.

**Vs 17 -** Here Paul is clear. This letter is coming from me and although it was likely written by a scribe, you can see my signature, in my own hand. This is a sign that this letter is legitimate that it is really from me, and I do this with every letter I write.

Once cannot help but think back to one of the possible sources of error on the erroneous teaching on the return of the Lord:

*“1 Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.” (2Th 2:1-2 ESV)*

**Vs** **18 - #5** – in closing, ***the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.***

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**Faith Lessons:**

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