

2 Thessalonians Pastor Lou DeVizia

2 Thessalonians 2:13 - 3:18 Fellowship Bible Church; Woodbridge, NJ

Introduction: Coming out of his teaching about the great "falling away" and the emergence of the "man of sin" both of which precede the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul wants to give encouragement to the Thessalonian Christians to be untroubled, to stand on sound doctrine and continue walking in the ways of the Lord. Paul gives thanks to God for them, encourages them to keep that which they have been taught, prays for their comfort and strength, and asks for their prayers on behalf of himself and his fellow workers. He concludes by addressing the importance of godly conduct, with the specific issue of honest labor being the proving grounds in this case.

1. Verses 2:13-17 - Encouragement to be Strong and Immovable from the Truth

- vv.13-14 - **But...** Paul is contrasting the vulnerability to the doctrinal error described in 2:1-12 with the fact that he knows God has soundly saved these people and will keep them. He gave thanks to God that He loved them and **chose** them to receive his wonderful **salvation**. That salvation comes through faith (our response to God, **belief in the truth**) and **sanctification** (God's work in us, being set apart by the work of the Holy **Spirit**) - both results of hearing the **gospel**.

- v.15 - **Stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught...** Don't move from sound doctrine.

- vv.16-17 - Knowing that God has **loved us** and given us **consolation** and **hope**, Paul prays that God would give these Christians two specific things: 1) **comfort**, and 2) strength to glorify God with both our words and deeds.

2. Verses 3:1-5 - God's Protection in the Battle

- vv.1-2 - Two prayer requests: 1) for the advancement of the ministry of the **word of the Lord**, and 2) to be **delivered** from the persecution of the unbelieving.

- vv.3-4 - Paul offers assurance of God's strength and protection, based on His faithfulness. But it is important to note that Paul just requested prayer for this previously. It is reasonable to conclude that *we need to pray for these things for each other*. In connection with the promise of strength and protection in v.3, Paul expresses **confidence** that these Christians will obey the word of God and adhere to the things they have been taught. Verses 3 and 4 are connected - as we devote ourselves to obeying the word of God and pray for His protection and strength, He is faithful and will answer, according to His will and in His time.

- v.5 - **...the love of God** and the **patience of Christ** Our hearts need to be filled with God's love, and we need to be patient (i.e., waiting, long-suffering) as Christ our example is.

3. Verses 3:6-18 - Godly Conduct: The Danger of Idleness, the Importance of Work

- vv.6-11 - A **command** is given to separate from professing brothers who are of **disorderly** conduct. *Proper conduct is essential for a Christian* on two fronts - it glorifies God, and it is a good testimony to man. The example of the disorder that Paul is addressing here is that some from among the brethren *refused to work*, turning instead to pleasure-filled living and burdening others (it is possible that this refusal to work was the result of discouragement resulting from the false teaching about Christ's return addressed in Chapter Two). As an expression of loving discipline towards these unruly **busybodies**, the believers were to not fellowship with them. Paul taught and set the **example** in this regard in the short time he spent with them: even though he had the right to be fed and cared for by

them, he and his companions chose to teach and set an example as they **worked with labor and toil night and day**, paid for their own bread, and (key:) were **not... a burden** to any of them. So important is this that Paul reissues here a command he gave them in person: **if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat**.

- v.12 - The original teaching restated: **work in quietness and eat their own bread**. On the one hand, Christian love and a commitment to compassion and good works makes it imperative that we bear one another's burdens. However, this is never to be used as a license to not provide for yourself by your own labor. Where a person is impaired from adequately providing for himself, certainly Christians should gladly seek to help. And when someone is hungry or cold, we should feed and shelter as God has equipped us to. Paul is not advocating that we examine and judge the lives of hungry strangers. This is teaching for the *church*. Every effort should be made by a person - *especially professing Christians, to whom this letter is addressed* - to work hard to supply for his obligations and necessities in life. God provides for our needs - by granting our ability to labor and earn wages is the most typical way that He does this in life. Remember the goal here: *orderly conduct*.

- v.13 - For those who are working hard, stay at it. Remember: *orderly conduct glorifies God and is a good testimony*. And working to provide for yourself is an example of orderly conduct (i.e., **doing good**).

- vv.14-15 - Paul reiterates the command to withdraw from the one who refuses to labor. The purpose is to stir up shame, which hopefully, as a humble Christian, he will respond to by correcting the situation. The motivation for this withdrawal is loving discipline, not self-righteous condemnation, and that spirit should always be evident. The goal is to correct and restore.

- vv.16-18 - A prayer for the sustaining of God's **peace**, His presence, and His **grace**.

Conclusion: It is important that we pray for each other often, and that we pray for spiritual things: strength, comfort, patience, etc. Also, it is important that we spend our days here on earth living responsibly. We should work hard, help others, and do all things out of a motive of love and grace. We glorify God and present a good testimony of our faith when our conduct is orderly.