

*Journeys With God*

# 2 Thessalonians

Chapter 3

**The Road Upward:**

**Revisiting the Future**

## 2 Thessalonians 3:1 - Pray For God's Glory

**As to the rest, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it has* with you,**

### **Truth to Learn**

Our prayers need to focus on God's glory, not our own.

### **Behind the Words**

"As to the rest" is translated from *loipos*, meaning "that which remains," "as to the rest," or "finally."

The word translated "pray" is *proseuchomai*, which is made up of *pros*, meaning "to" or "towards" and *euchomai*, which literally means "to speak out, to utter aloud, or to express a wish." Therefore, *proseuchomai* means "to express a wish to someone" or "to speak out to someone." In virtually every occurrence of this verb in the New Testament, the person being spoken to is God. The verb is expressed here in the imperative mood, expressing a command.

The words "may run *swiftly*" are from the verb *trechō*, meaning "to run." The word "*swiftly*" has been added for clarity, indicated by its being written in italics. The emphasis here is for fast action. It is expressed here in the subjunctive mood, indicating possibility or probability.

The Greek verb *doxadzō* is translated as "be glorified." The root of this word is *doxa*, which we saw in **2 Thessalonians 2:14**, meaning "reputation, praise, honor, or splendor." Thus, *doxadzō* means "to give praise" or "to give honor."

### **Meaning Explained**

The main purpose of this second letter from the Apostle Paul to the Christians in Thessalonica was to clear up some false teaching in the church regarding the Day of the Lord. Having finished that portion of his teaching, Paul then prayed that God might comfort them and strengthen them in their faith.

Paul is ever mindful of the necessity and power of prayer. His letters are filled with prayers for others and prayer requests for himself and his companions. So, after having prayed for the Thessalonians, he now asks them to pray for him. We might wonder why the eminently successful apostle frequently asks for prayer, until we realize that the reason for his success is partly a result of these prayers. He knows that whatever success he has is not because of how great he is, but how great God is.

Notice, now, that the object of Paul's prayers is never his own glorification, but that God might be glorified. In fact, if you read 2 Corinthians chapter twelve, you will see that he did not like to boast about himself, even though he had experienced visions and had been given revelations directly from God. As a matter of fact, he realized that God had allowed an affliction which Paul called his "thorn in the flesh" in order to keep him humbly focused on God and His glory. Paul pleaded with the Lord several times for his infirmity to be removed but recognized that God allowed it to keep him from getting too proud of himself. He even learned to boast about his infirmity, knowing that it was for God's glory.

In his current prayer request, Paul asks the Thessalonian Christians to pray that the word of the Lord might move quickly. He wanted the gospel message to travel far and wide so that many souls might be saved, resulting in glory to God.

### **Application**

Think about your own prayer requests. When you ask others to pray for you, is it so that you will feel better or so that you will be successful? Are your prayer requests focused on God being glorified, or are they focused on you? Ouch! That hurts.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:2 - Protect The Messengers

**and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.**

### **Truth to Learn**

Those who deliver the gospel message need God's protection.

### **Behind the Words**

"We may be delivered" is translated from the Greek verb *rhuomai*. This word is derived from *rhuō*, meaning "to drag along the ground." *Rhuomai* means "to draw out" or "to snatch from danger." It is most often translated as "to rescue" or "to deliver." It is expressed here in the subjunctive mood, indicating possibility or probability.

The Greek word translated "unreasonable" is *atopos*. This is made up of the privative *a*, meaning "not" or "without" and *topos*, meaning "a place." So, *atopos* literally means "out of place" or "without a place." Figuratively, this word means "improper, unreasonable, or hurtful."

*Ponēros* is the Greek word translated "wicked." It refers to "evil in a moral or spiritual sense." It is usually translated as "bad, evil, or wicked."

### **Meaning Explained**

The Apostle Paul is in the middle of a prayer request to the people of the church in Thessalonica. In the previous verse he asked that they pray for swift movement of the word of the Lord. It was Paul's desire to see the gospel spread all over the world; his hope and his prayer were that it would move swiftly from one place to the next.

Now Paul requests that he and his co-workers be delivered from (protected from) those who are opposed to the gospel message. He refers to them as unreasonable, or hurtful, and as wicked, or evil. From the time that Paul first landed in Macedonia (in Philippi) he preached the gospel and was opposed by non-believing Jews. In Philippi he and Silas (Sylvanus) were thrown in jail. When they moved on to Thessalonica, they were again persecuted by the non-believing Jews. Having secretly left Thessalonica by night, they went to Berea. But when the Jews of Thessalonica heard that Paul was in Berea, they went after him there and stirred up the people against him. So Paul headed to Athens and then to Corinth, from where he wrote this letter. He remained there at least a year and a half. While in Corinth, however, Paul was brought before the judgment seat of the proconsul Gallio. There the Jews accused him of persuading people to worship God contrary to the law, but the case was dismissed even before Paul had a chance to speak. (Read Acts chapters 16 – 18.)

Wherever Paul went, two things regularly happened: he preached the gospel to anyone who would listen, and he was opposed by those who didn't believe his message. Instead of keeping silent to protect himself, Paul preached the word boldly and asked believers to pray for his safety and protection from those who opposed the gospel message.

### **Application**

All around the world we are seeing more and more opposition to the true gospel message. We see churches, where the truth of God has been watered down, growing and prospering. But those that remain faithful to the fundamental truths of the Bible are finding it more and more difficult to survive. Around the world, Christians are more frequently becoming the targets of violence.

We all need to be praying for each other that we will be strong and that God will continue to protect us as we deliver the most important message to those who need it most.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:3 - Walking Faith

**But the Lord is faithful, and He will establish you and guard you from the evil one.**

### Truth to Learn

Walking by faith means trusting that God will establish and guard you both now and in the future.

### Behind the Words

The word translated “faithful” is *pistos*, which is based on *peithō*, meaning “to win over” or “to persuade.” In common usage it refers to someone who is worth believing, that is, someone who does what he or she says they will do. In Greek, word order is significant, with emphasis being given to the word or words expressed first. In this verse, the word order is “Faithful is the Lord,” thus emphasizing God’s faithfulness.

“Establish” is from the Greek verb *stēridzō*, which is based on the noun *histēmi*, meaning “to stand.” *Stēridzō* means “to set firmly in place.” It is expressed here in the future tense, indicating action that God is going to do.

The word “guard” is translated from *phulassō*, which means “to keep watch over” or “to protect from harm.”

*Ponēros* is the word translated “evil one.” In the previous verse it was translated “wicked.” It refers to “evil in a moral or spiritual sense.” In this verse it is preceded by the definite article *the*, indicating a specific evil person.

### Meaning Explained

As we mentioned above, Paul starts off this verse with “faithful,” which is the word *pistos*. What’s particularly interesting about this is that he ended the previous verse with “faith,” from the word *pistis*. Apparently, Paul is making a play on words here, saying “Not all men have faith in the Lord, but faithfulness is a characteristic of God.”

He is also using a play on words to make a point regarding how God will take care of us. He does this through his use of the verb *stēridzō*. A few verses back, in **2 Thessalonians 2:15**, Paul gave a command to “**stand fast** and keep a firm hold on the things you have been taught.” The command form (imperative mood) of the verb implies it is something that is not happening, but it needs to happen. Then, in his prayer for them, Paul asks that God “**may ... establish you** in every good word and work.” The use of *stēridzō* in that verse (**2 Thessalonians 2:17**) is in the optative mood, indicating that it may not be happening currently, but that it probably would. Now, in the current verse, Paul says that “the Lord **will establish you** and guard you.” This is expressed in the indicative mood, as something that definitely will happen because the Lord is faithful.

Not only will God make our stand firm, He will also protect us from the evil one. There is some disagreement among Biblical scholars as to whether Paul is talking about Satan (as Jesus was in His prayer for His disciples in **Matthew 6:13**), or to one of the “unreasonable and wicked men” that he referred to in the previous verse. Whatever position you take on this issue, the point is that God is faithful; He always does what He says He will do, and Paul says that He will establish and guard His children.

### **Application**

Just because we're saved through "faith" in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, doesn't mean that we have "faith" in God's protection and care for us. Saving faith is a one-time thing; walking faith is a lifelong thing. Are you currently walking by faith daily, trusting God to establish and guard you?

## 2 Thessalonians 3:4 - Obey Your Commander

**And we are persuaded in the Lord concerning you, both that the things we command you, you both do and will do.**

### Truth to Learn

It's up to Him and He is faithful. But, it's also up to us to do our part.

### Behind the Words

“We are persuaded” is translated from the Greek verb *peithō*, which, as we learned in the previous verse, means “to win over” or “to persuade.” It is expressed here in the perfect tense, indicating past completed action with an ongoing effect, where the emphasis is on the ongoing effect. Therefore, Paul is saying “we were persuaded (in the past) and now have belief (confidence) ...”

*Parangellō* is the Greek word translated “command.” It is composed of *para*, meaning “near” or “beside” and *angellō*, meaning “to tell” or “to declare.” It is used in a military sense of “relaying an order from the commander from one soldier to the next.”

The words “you ... do” and “you will do” are from the verb *poieō*, which means “to make” or “to do.” In the first case it is expressed in the present tense, and in the second case it is expressed in the future tense. Thus, Paul is saying “... that you do now and you will do in the future ...”

### Meaning Explained

In the first chapter of this letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, Paul commended them on the manner in which their faith was growing exceedingly and in the love which they demonstrated towards each other. He also encouraged them that God would take vengeance against those who persecuted them. In the second chapter, he cleared up some confusion they had concerning the Day of the Lord and explained why that time had not yet arrived. In this third chapter, Paul is giving them (and us) some practical teaching regarding how to have a profitable and fruitful Christian walk.

As we mentioned in the previous verse, the Apostle Paul is making a play on words here regarding the Greek word *pistis* (faith). In verse two he stated that “... not all have faith.” Then in yesterday's verse he said, “but the Lord is faithful ...” Now he states, “and we have confidence (faith) ...” He is clearly showing that a fruitful Christian life is based not just on the working of God but also on our own responsibility. God will guard us and protect us from the evil one, but we have to do our part in faithfully performing the things that are commanded of us.

A fruitful and rewarding Christian walk is not easy. Any Christian who says he or she doesn't daily have battles against his or her sin nature and the schemes of our adversary is deluding himself or herself. Once we have believed the truth about our own sinfulness and have accepted the payment that Jesus Christ made for us with his blood, we don't simply float through life with bliss and ease. The day of our salvation did not mark the end our troubles and battles in life, it marked the beginning. God has done his part and He will continue to guard our salvation, but it is up to us to make this new life count for Him.

### Application

If you are a born again Christian, then you are facing struggles and battles right now. We all do! They may be big or they may be small, but don't despair and don't give up. God is doing His part; you have to do yours.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:5 - Our Heavenly Guide

Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

### Truth to Learn

As you travel through this life, follow God's directions.

### Behind the Words

“Direct” is translated from the Greek verb *kateuthenō*. This is a compound word made up of *kata*, used as an intensifier and *euthunō*, which means “to make straight.” This is a nautical term which means “to steer a ship in the proper direction.” It is expressed here in the optative mood, indicating action that may or may not be occurring currently, but that could occur.

The word translated “love” is *agapē*, which refers to the kind of self-sacrificing love that is part of God's very nature.

“Patience” is from the word *hupomone*, which is made up of *hupo*, meaning “under” or “beneath” and a form of the verb *menō*, meaning “to remain” or “to stay in place.” It is a picture of a beast of burden remaining under a heavy load instead of shaking it off. It is often translated as “patience” or “steadfastness.”

### Meaning Explained

Throughout this Bible study series we have been highlighting the fact that the Christian life is a journey. It's a journey along the pathway of life, full of twists and turns, rocky places and smooth places, steep hills and peaceful valleys, firm ground and slippery, mucky ground. There are also many places where the pathway splits, presenting us multiple options for which way to go. Throughout our travels, the most comforting and reassuring fact is that we are not on this journey alone. We have a Guide who has walked these paths before, a Comforter and Encourager who knows where every path leads, who knows what pitfalls are coming long before we fall into them. The best thing of all is the fact that our guide wants us to walk with Him and follow His lead.

But – He is not a dictator who forces us to take the right path; He simply directs in a quiet manner and leaves it up to us to follow His lead or not. He even allows us to step off the pathway and “do our own thing,” even though He knows that our choices will sometimes bring us trouble and heartache. And, when we take a wrong turn, getting lost or mired in the mud, He gently teaches us the error of our way and welcomes us back with loving, open arms.

This is what Paul's prayer in today's verse is all about. He prays to our loving, heavenly Guide, asking Him to direct our hearts. But notice what the destination is. He doesn't ask God to direct us to peace and safety. That will come at the end of our journey, to be sure. Instead, Paul prays that God will direct our hearts into the self-sacrificing love that is part of who God is. Notice that this destination is not one which is focused on us, but on others. As the Apostle John says in **1 John 4:7**, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God.”

The other destination that Paul prays about is “the patience of Christ.” Sometimes God directs us onto difficult pathways so that we might grow and become more Christ-like. This is not a punishment, but a proving ground put in our path to teach us patience.

### Application

Hang in there, my friend. When difficulties arise, it doesn't necessarily mean you have done something wrong. Keep your eyes fixed on Him and grow into the image of Christ.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:6 - Judgment With Love

**But we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which you received from us.**

### Truth to Learn

There are times when Christians are supposed to judge others.

### Behind the Words

The Greek word translated “command” is *parangellō*, which we saw back in verse four. It refers to a command given by a superior officer which is passed on from one person to the next.

The word “name” is from *onoma*, which specifically means “name.” However in the common usage of the first century it usually referred to the title or authority or someone.

“Withdraw” is from a form of *stellō*, meaning “to set fast,” that is, “to repress or avoid.” In the middle voice, as it is here, it means “to withdraw oneself from.”

*Adelphos* is the word translated “brother.” It specifically refers to someone from the same womb, hence, “a brother or sister.” It is used throughout the New Testament to refer to “a brother or sister in the Lord,” that is, another Christian.

“Disorderly” is translated from *ataktōs*, which is made up of the privative *a*, meaning “not” and a form of *tassō*, meaning “to arrange in an orderly manner.” Thus, *ataktōs* refers to a person who is disorderly or neglectful of their responsibilities.

### Meaning Explained

A couple of verses back, the Apostle Paul expressed his faith that the readers of this letter would continue obeying the commands that he was passing along. He now gives one of those commands, specifically stating that we are to withdraw ourselves from other Christians whose lives are not demonstrating obedience to God.

There are two things that we can learn from today’s verse. The first is that we are supposed to judge the behavior of other Christians. Even though Christ said, “**Judge not, that you be not judged.**” In **Matthew 7:1**, he was referring to not having a judgmental attitude. There are several examples in the New Testament where we are told to make judgments about others and this is one of them. Paul does not tell us here that we are to condemn these disorderly and disobedient brothers and sisters, we simply are to withdraw ourselves from them. The reason for withdrawing from them is two-fold. It sends a message to the disobedient ones that their actions are inappropriate and it keeps us from being adversely affected by their behavior. It’s hard enough to walk the Christian walk without having others affecting our actions by their bad example.

The other thing we need to learn from today’s verse is that we should not carry this teaching to extremes. There are some churches which teach that if a brother or sister is not withdrawing himself or herself from another Christian who is disorderly, then we should break fellowship with them. Carried to an extreme, this isolates such churches from nearly all other Christians. Such churches become very legalistic and completely lose their effectiveness in ministering to others and witnessing to the lost.

### **Application**

We need to make judgments concerning other Christians, but we need to do so in love, as our Lord would do. We also need to be willing to welcome them back into the fold when they repent. Let love and mercy guide your actions, not vengeance.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:7 - Walk, or Just Talk?

**For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, for we were not disorderly among you;**

### **Truth to Learn**

The most effective proclaimer of the Gospel truth is someone who lives the kind of life he preaches about.

### **Behind the Words**

The word translated “know” is *eidō*, which means “to see with perception.” As in English, this verb can refer to visibly seeing something and perceiving what it is, or it can mean “to see with the mind,” that is, “to know.” It is expressed here in the perfect tense, indicating past completed action with an ongoing effect, where the emphasis is on the effect.

“You ought” is from the Greek word *dei*, meaning “it is necessary.” It is a bold statement by Paul, for he is not saying “you could ...” or even “you should.” He is saying “you need to follow our example.”

“Imitate” is translated from *mimeomai*, from which we get our English word “mimic.” It means “to imitate” or “to follow as an example.”

The words “we were not disorderly” are from the word *ou* and the verb *atakteō*. *Ou* expresses absolute negation (the Greek word *mē* expressed conditional negation). *Atakteō* is from the same root as *ataktos*, which we saw in yesterday’s verse, meaning “to be disorderly.” It is used in a military sense, indicating soldiers who have broken ranks and are not following an orderly course of action.

### **Meaning Explained**

In the previous verse, Paul instructed the Christians in Thessalonica to withdraw themselves from those who are disorderly, those who are not demonstrating obedience to God. You may also recall that the main purpose of this letter was to correct teaching regarding the Day of the Lord. There had been people who falsely taught that this time of God’s vengeance had already begun.

Based on this verse and the following seven or eight verses, Paul appears to be teaching how to identify the difference between those who teach true doctrine and those who teach false doctrine. His first teaching in this regard is that Paul and his companions were not disorderly. And we will find out in the coming verses that they worked hard for what they had.

There are many preachers today who tell you what you want to hear. They claim that God wants you to be wealthy or that God wants you to be completely healed. They are very charismatic, presenting themselves as someone who can lead you out of your misery into an earthly life of peace and prosperity, and usually asking you to send them money “for their ministry.” Paul, on the other hand, was humble, apparently not very tall or charismatic, and supported his own ministry by working as a tent maker. Which of these two types of preachers do you want to follow as an example of Christian teaching and Christian living? Paul was bold enough to tell people, “Do as I do, not just as I say.”

### **Application**

Who is your favorite preacher or Bible teacher? Is he someone who lives an exemplary life of a submitted servant? Does he just talk the talk, or does he also walk the walk?

## 2 Thessalonians 3:8 - A Servant Above Reproach

**nor did we eat anyone's bread as a free gift, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,**

### Truth to Learn

The Apostle Paul behaved above reproach in his ministry.

### Behind the Words

The Greek word translated “as a free gift” is *dōrean*, which is based on *dōron*, meaning “a gift.” Hence, *dōrean* means “as a free gift.”

“Worked” is translated from *ergadzomai*, which is a form of *ergon*, meaning “work.” *Ergadzomai* means “to be engaged in work or labor, usually as a regular trade.”

*Kopos* is the word translated “labor.” Its base meaning is “to cut,” but it is used to refer to “hard labor which produces weariness.”

The word “toil” is translated from *mochthos*, which refers to “painful labor.”

“Burden” is from the Greek verb *epibareō*. This is composed of *epi*, meaning “on” or “upon,” used here as an intensifier and *bareō*, meaning “to weigh down with a heavy burden.” Thus, *epibareō* means “to place a heavy burden on someone.”

### Meaning Explained

Paul has been talking about those in the church who are disorderly, especially those teachers who had come into the church in Thessalonica and had taught them erroneous truths about the Day of the Lord. In order to demonstrate his own commitment to God and to the Christians in Thessalonica, Paul is explaining to them how he, Timothy, and Sylvanus (Silas) had behaved while they ministered to the saints there.

In Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth, he explained at length why ministers of the gospel have a right to expect to be supported by those to whom they minister (see **1 Corinthians 9:1-27**). Also, from **Acts 18:2, 3** we learn that Paul was a tentmaker by trade and worked in that occupation to support himself while he was also working full-time as a preacher of the gospel. Apparently, this was his practice wherever he went so as not to be a burden to those who received his teaching.

In today’s verse we again see how hard Paul worked (apparently both as a preacher and a tentmaker) in order to deliver the Gospel message. Here he reminds the Thessalonians that he did not receive free food from anyone in the church in Thessalonica. Instead, he put in long hours, working to the point of weariness and pain, so that he could give his teachings to everyone free of charge.

Certainly, Paul is not claiming that those who proclaim the Gospel message should do so without pay. In fact, in addition to the verses referenced above, he teaches just the opposite in **Galatians 6:6** and in **1 Timothy 5:17, 18**. We who receive sound doctrinal teaching should be willing to support those who labor hard to accurately proclaim God’s truth. In this passage, however, Paul was making a point that he has behaved above reproach in performing his ministry.

### **Application**

Does your preacher declare the truth of God's word week-in and week-out? Doing so takes hard work and dedication. Does he receive the appropriate recognition and reward from the church? Even a hand-written note of thanks helps.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:9 - Christ-like Selflessness

not because we do not have authority, but that we might give ourselves *as* an example for you to imitate us.

### Truth to Learn

Our love for others is shown in what we sacrifice for them.

### Behind the Words

“**Authority**” is translated from the Greek noun *exousia*, which is derived from the verb *exesti*, meaning “it is permissible.” Thus, *exousia* refers to “permission, authority, or the power to do something.”

The word translated “we might **give**” is a form of *didōmi*, meaning “to give something of one’s own accord,” that is “to freely give a gift.” It is expressed here in the subjunctive mood, indicating the possibility or probability of giving. So, literally, Paul is saying “that we might freely give ourselves as an example ...”

“**Example**” is from the Greek word *tupos*, from which we get our English word “type.” It refers to an object that is struck with a blow to produce a specific mark or impression. In common usage it refers to an example that is to be followed or imitated.

The word “**imitate**” is from the verb *mimēomai*, which we saw back in verse seven, meaning “to imitate” or “to follow as an example.”

### Meaning Explained

As we learned in yesterday’s verse, like every other faithful preacher of God’s word the Apostle Paul had the right to receive compensation from those to whom he ministered. However, he didn’t receive anything from the people in Thessalonica because he didn’t want to be a burden to them. Here he tells us that he also wanted to be an example of what it means to sacrifice for the good of others.

He taught the Galatians:

But the one who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.  
(**Galatians 6:6**)

And to the Corinthians, he said:

Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat *the food* of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of *the offerings* of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should get their living from the gospel. (**1 Corinthians 9:13-14**)

Nonetheless, Paul had another lesson to teach the Thessalonians (and us). If we are to become more like Christ, we need to be willing to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others. Paul did not take any type of compensation from the Thessalonians, not because he didn’t deserve it, but because he was showing his own Christ-likeness by sacrificing himself for their sakes. And, he was not behaving this way just to please God; he was giving them (and us) an example that we can observe and mimic. Here’s what he said to the Philippians:

... but in humility of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (**Philippians 2:3b, 4**)

### **Application**

The Christian walk is all about love. Not just the love we have for God, but also the love we have (and show) for others. Are you willing to sacrifice for God? Are you willing to sacrifice for the sake of other Christians? That's what Paul did.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:10 - A Fine Line

**For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone is not willing to work, neither is he to eat.**

### **Truth to Learn**

There is a difference between showing love and enabling the laziness of others.

### **Behind the Words**

The Greek word translated “we commanded” is *parangellō*, which is made up of *para*, meaning “to the side of” or “with” and *angellō*, meaning “to declare a message.” It is used in a military sense of “relaying an order from the commander from one soldier to the next.” It is expressed here in the imperfect tense, which implies past, continuous action.

In the New Testament there are three Greek conditional clauses. The first class condition assumes that the condition is true. The second class condition assumes that it is false. The third class condition makes no assumption. The expression “if any will not work” is a first class condition. Therefore, it is assumed that there were some who had determined not to work.

“Willing” is from the Greek verb *thelō*, which means “to determine as an act of the will.”

*Ergadzomai* is the verb translated “work.” It means “to be engaged in a task or occupation.”

“Eat” is from *esthiō*, meaning “to consume food.” It is expressed here in the imperative mood indicating a command.

### **Meaning Explained**

Having written about how unselfishly he and his associates have behaved toward the Thessalonian Christians, Paul now turns his attention towards the members of the church. Apparently, there were people there who refused to work. We’ll learn more about them in the next verse. Instead of working, these people depended on the church to provide for them. Having to work hard for food is a result of the curse. Remember what God told Adam and Eve after the fall?

**In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:19)**

Apparently, the problem of people being disorderly and lazy had existed in the Thessalonian church from the beginning. Paul tells us here that he and his associates passed on a command from our Lord that anyone who can work but refuses to work must not depend on others to feed them. These Thessalonians were also very likely familiar with several of their own philosophers, including Homer, Demosthenes, and Pythagoras, who all declared that lazy people should not be provided with food from those who are industrious.

Keep in mind, there is a difference between those who cannot work and those who will not work. This church in Thessalonica had a problem with people who would not work. Christians should always be kind and generous to those who cannot work. In fact, if we truly love our Christian brothers and sisters, we will (as we quoted in yesterday’s verse), “Do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” But, if we provide the daily needs for others who can work but refuse to, we are only enabling their laziness.

### **Application**

As with many teachings in the Bible, there is a fine line between showing love to others and enabling the laziness of others. We should all be generous toward others, but we must also see that everyone does what he or she can by working hard.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:11 - Another Fine Line

**For we hear that there are some among you walking in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but being busybodies.**

### **Truth to Learn**

There is a difference between taking care of the needs of others and becoming a know-it-all busybody.

### **Behind the Words**

The Greek word translated “we hear” is *akouō*, from which we get our English word acoustic. It means “to hear something” or “to listen to something.” The form of the word used here indicates present continuous action. Thus, it appears that Paul was repeatedly hearing about these problem people.

“Walking” is from *peripateō*, meaning “to walk around.” It refers to the manner in which someone lives his or her life.

The words “in a disorderly manner” are from *atakteō*, which we saw back in verse seven, meaning “to be disorderly.”

*Ergadzomai* is the verb translated “work.” It means “to be engaged in a task or occupation.”

“Busybodies” is translated from the verb *periergazomai*, which is made up of *peri*, meaning “around” and *ergadzomai*, meaning “to work.” Literally, it means “to work around.” It refers to someone who is constantly busy, but never really accomplishing anything. It also refers to someone who meddles in the affairs of others instead of doing their own work.

### **Meaning Explained**

People who have nothing of constructive value to do often end up meddling in the affairs of others. This problem was not (and is not) something that only occurred in Thessalonica. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul said:

And besides they learn *to be* idle, going about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. **(1 Timothy 5:13)**

Also, the Apostle Peter, in his first general epistle said:

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or as a meddler in other people's matters. **(1 Peter 4:15)**

From this we can see that Peter categorizes people who are busybodies in the same group as murders, thieves, and other doers of evil things.

We all know people who have a habit of sticking their noses into other people’s affairs. They act like know-it-alls and like to share their knowledge with others whether others want it or not. They are often quick to give advice but seldom willing to take advice. Paul, in his first letter to the church in Thessalonica seems to have been talking to just such people.

that you also **Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your hands, as we commanded you, (1 Thessalonians 4:11)**

We see here another fine line. This one between “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others,” (**Philippians 2:4**) and being a busybody. Let’s make sure we don’t cross that line.

### **Application**

It is good and right to look out for the concerns of others, but don’t step over the line and become a know-it-all busybody. Instead, be humble as you work hard to provide for yourself and others and show your love to others with generosity, grace, and humility.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:12 - Share the Load

Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

### Truth to Learn

Everyone in the church needs to carry his or her own weight.

### Behind the Words

The words “who are such” come from the Greek word *toioutos*. It basically means “of this kind or sort.” It is a direct reference to “some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.”

“We command” is from the verb *parangellō*, which we have seen several times recently. It means “to relay an order from the commander from one soldier to the next.”

The word “exhort” is translated from *parakaleō*, meaning “to encourage, challenge, or comfort.”

The Greek word translated “quietness” is *hēsuchia*, which refers to “quietness, tranquility, or silence.” As used here it refers to a quiet, unobtrusive lifestyle.

*Arton* is the word translated “bread.” Specifically, it refers to a loaf of bread, but it is often used, as it is here, in reference to anything that is eaten as a meal.

### Meaning Explained

You will recall that the purpose of this second letter to the Christians in the church at Thessalonica was to clear up some false teaching that the Day of the Lord had already arrived. Because of this misconception, there apparently were people in the church who figured they could stop working for themselves since the “end” was very near.

In yesterday’s verse, Paul used a play on words. He is especially fond of this literary device. He said of these particular people that they are “not working,” from the word *ergadzomai*, but that they are “busbodies,” from the word *periergadzomai*. In today’s verse he addresses them directly. Not only does he command these people to work in quietness, but he also challenges them to do so. This is another play on words (*parangellō* and *parakaleō*), but it is also a very strong statement from the apostle. Today we might say, “Get to work, and do it quietly, without complaining or bothering others.”

Remember that all Christians are part of the body of Christ. What we do affects other members of the body, either positively or negatively. If we are not working for our own needs and for the needs of the body, then others have to take up the slack. And, while there are many Christians who are willing to sacrifice themselves to build up the body and support others, it is not right that they should have to do the work of others in addition to their own work.

In the following verses, we will learn from Paul how we should act ourselves and how we should respond to those who do not heed the instructions given.

### **Application**

Are you working hard in your own life and in the life of the church? Or do you depend on others to provide for you and let others carry all the weight in the church? If our Lord was standing next to you, what would He say about your performance? Remember, He IS standing next to you!

## 2 Thessalonians 3:13 - Don't Get Discouraged

**And you, brothers, do not get discouraged *in* doing good.**

### **Truth to Learn**

Work hard for God and don't get discouraged.

### **Behind the Words**

*Adelphos* is the word translated “brothers.” It literally refers to someone from the same womb, hence, “a brother or sister.” It is used throughout the New Testament as a term of endearment, referring to “a brother or sister in the Lord,” that is another Christian.

The words “get discouraged” are from the Greek verb *ekkakeō*. This word is made up of *ek*, meaning “out of,” used here as an intensifier, and a form of *kakos*, meaning “evil or bad.” It means “to lose one's courage.”

“Doing good” is translated from the verb *kalopoieō*, which is composed of *kalos*, meaning “something that is inherently good or beautiful” and *poieō*, meaning “to make or to do,” thus, *kalopoieō* means “to do something good or virtuous.”

### **Meaning Explained**

Paul has been writing about people in the church who are not busy doing constructive things but, instead, are depending on others for their daily needs and sticking their nose into other people's business. As a result, he sternly told the Thessalonian Christians (and us) to work quietly and provide for their (our) own needs.

A natural response from our sinful nature might be “Well, if I can't depend on others to take care of my needs, then I'm not going to do anything for anyone else either.” Knowing that this is how the human mind tends to work, Paul now addresses this type of response head on. He starts out with, “And you, brothers ...” Notice the term of endearment that he uses. He calls us brothers and sisters. Even the great Apostle Paul does not refer to us as being any less important than he is.

He goes on to say, “don't become discouraged doing good.” In many other translations of this verse we see the words “grow weary” or “become tired,” but the word *ekkakeō* does not imply tiredness or fatigue; instead, it carries the idea of being discouraged. If Paul were intending to say, “don't get tired,” he would have probably used the words *ekluō* (to relax, that is, to become tired or weary), or *kamnō* (to become tired or faint from working) instead. The point is that Paul is not saying it is wrong to get tired or fatigued from doing what is right. He is saying that we shouldn't get discouraged from it. Nearly every Christian who gives his all to God and serves Him faithfully gets tired. It's okay to get tired *in* the work, but we should never get tired *of* the work.

In Thessalonica, as in churches today, there was a core group of Christians who carried on the work of the ministry. There were also others who didn't carry their fair share and who either complained or told those who are working how to do their jobs. This is discouraging to those who are working hard.

### **Application**

Let's all commit ourselves to doing the work that God has given us to do without complaint, even when we get tired. Let's also encourage others to join us in the work. Remember, it's all for Him and for His glory, not our own.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:14 - Breaking Fellowship

**And if anyone does not obey our word in this letter, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.**

### Truth to Learn

We are not to fellowship with other Christians who are rebellious and disobedient.

### Behind the Words

“Obey” is translated from the Greek word *hupokouō*, which is made up of *hupo*, meaning “under” or “beneath” and *akouō*, meaning “to listen” or “to hear.” It is a picture of a student sitting under the instruction of a master and applying what is being taught.

The word translated “note” is *sēmeioō*, which means “to sign, mark, or make a mental note about.” It is expressed here in the middle voice, indicating action that is done by the subject to himself or herself. Thus *sēmeioō*, as it is used here, means “to make a mental note to yourself.”

*Sunanamignumi* is the Greek word translated “keep company.” It is a double compound word made up of *sun*, meaning “together” or “with,” *ana*, meaning “on” or “again,” and *mignumi*, meaning “to mix or intermingle.” This verb is also expressed in the middle voice, so as used here it means “to intermingle yourself again with someone else.” In other words, it means “to associate yourself with” or “to keep company with.”

The words “may be ashamed” are from the Greek verb *entrepō*, which is made up of *en*, meaning “in or upon” and *trepō*, meaning “to turn.” Therefore, *entrepō* literally means “to turn upon” or “to turn in.” It is expressed here in the passive voice indicating something done to the subject. Thus, as it is used here it means “he may be turned into himself.” In other words, it means “he may look into himself and understand why this has been done to him.”

### Meaning Explained

Over the past few verses, Paul has been talking about people within the church who are being lazy and expecting others to provide for their needs, and walking around sticking their noses into other people’s business. He instructed that everyone is to work hard without complaining or telling others what to do. In yesterday’s verse, we were reminded not to get discouraged by such behavior, but to continue doing good deeds to everyone.

In this verse and the following one, Paul gives instruction regarding those who don’t put into practice what is being taught from the Word. This is not just directed at the unruly members of the church, but at anyone who refuses to follow sound Biblical teaching. Back in verse six, Paul said,

But we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which you received from us. (2 Thessalonians 3:6)

Unfortunately, in the past, the Roman Catholic church has perverted this teaching in order to “excommunicate” anyone who disagrees with their church teaching. That’s not Paul’s purpose, as we will see in tomorrow’s verse.

### Application

We are commanded to “break fellowship” with Christians who reject sound doctrine. But, we are to do so in love, in order to help them to submit to the lordship of Christ. This means that we first have to be submitted to Him ourselves. Are you?

## 2 Thessalonians 3:15 - Loving Restoration, Not Punishment

Yet do not regard *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

### Truth to Learn

Church discipline should be done as an act of love, with the objective being restoration and growth, not punishment.

### Behind the Words

The word “**count**” is translated from the Greek verb *hēgeomai*, which is based on the verb *agō*, meaning “to lead” or “to go before.” Metaphorically, this word means “to lead out before the mind,” that is, “to regard, esteem, count, or reckon.” Today, we might say “... don’t think of him as ...” It is expressed here in the imperative mood, indicating a command.

“**Enemy**” is from *echthros*, which refers to “someone who is an enemy” or “someone who is hated.”

The word translated “**admonish**” is translated from *noutheteō*. It is made up of *nous*, meaning “the mind” and *tithēmi*, meaning “to put” or “to place.” Thus, *noutheteō* means “to place in the mind” or “to warn, admonish, or exhort.” This verb is also expressed here in the imperative mood.

“**Brother**” is from the Greek word *adelphos*, which we saw a couple of verses back. As used here, it means “a brother or sister in the Lord,” that is, another Christian.

### Meaning Explained

The concept Paul is talking about in yesterday’s verse and this one is often referred to as “church discipline.” It is necessary in any organization to have some form of action against those who cause problems. Within the church, it is just as important for such discipline to be done with love and with the end objective being to restore the person to full fellowship with the Lord and with the church. Notice that what Paul is talking about here is not a punishment; it is not to be used as retaliation for their actions, but as discipline with a loving attitude. This is to be done like a parent disciplining a child in order to make him or her a better person.

There are several kinds of behavior that require discipline within the church and each has its own proper response. If a brother or sister sins against you, you are to confront him or her in person, then confront him or her in the presence of two or three witnesses if he or she will not listen to you. Then you are to reveal it to the church if he or she still won’t listen. And, if all these fail, reject that person from the church (**Matthew 18:15-17**). If someone in the church is teaching doctrinal error, that person should be patiently taught the truth (**2 Timothy 2:23-26**) and if he or she persists, then the church leadership should rebuke that person (**Titus 1:10-14**). If a brother or sister is overtaken in sin, then one who is spiritually mature should restore him or her in love (**Galatians 6:1-3**). If a brother or sister is causing division within the church, he or she should be warned twice and then rejected (**Titus 3:10**). If someone in the church is living in open immorality, you are not to keep company with him or her (**1 Corinthians 5:9**).

What Paul is specifically addressing in this letter is the brother or sister who is a busybody and refuses to work. He says that if such a person does not respond to the teaching in this letter, we are not to have fellowship with that person, and we are to warn that person but not treat him or her as an enemy.

### **Application**

Whenever discipline is necessary, it must be done with love and humility in order to cause restoration, not as vengeance or retribution.

## 2 Thessalonians 3:16 - No Worries, Mate

And may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord *be* with you all.

### Truth to Learn

There is no cause for worry when the Lord of peace is our God.

### Behind the Words

“Lord” is from the Greek noun *kurios*, which is based on *kuros*, meaning “might, power, or control.” *Kurios* refers to someone who has supreme authority or control over someone else.

The word translated “peace” is *eirēnē*. It can refer to an absence of war and dissension, that is, harmony among individuals. However, it can also refer to peace of mind and mental tranquility. It is a state in which there is no perceived threat or cause for worry present.

*Autos* is the Greek word translated “Himself.” This word literally means “self” and is used for emphasis, setting apart “the Lord” from everyone and everything else. In Greek, word order is very important and in the Greek text of this verse, the word *autos* is the first word, making it emphatic that it is the Lord and no one else who gives us peace.

“Always” and “every” are both translated from forms of the word *pas*, which contains the idea of oneness and a totality of the whole.

The word “way” is from the Greek word *tropō*, which literally means “a turn” as one would turn from one path to another. It is used symbolically to refer to “a general manner of life.”

### Meaning Explained

Having finished his teaching in this letter, Paul now closes with a benediction, as is his custom. The expression “the Lord of peace Himself” is found nowhere else in the New Testament, although Paul uses the expression “the God of peace Himself” in his first letter to the Christian believers in the church at Thessalonica (**1 Thessalonians 5:23**).

Why is it so important for him to refer to the God of peace or the master of peace? You will recall that the purpose of both of these letters was to correct some false teaching regarding the Day of the Lord. Because of this false teaching, the believers in Thessalonica were confused and concerned that they had missed the rapture and were living during the time of God’s great wrath. Now having corrected this teaching, Paul wanted the Thessalonians to stop worrying and, instead, experience peace in their lives. As the God of peace and the master of peace, only He can provide us with this “peace that surpasses all understanding,” as Paul called it in **Philippians 4:7**.

Notice that God can give us this peace at all times no matter what is occurring in our lives. “But I don’t feel at peace right now,” you may say. If we believe that Jesus Christ is a loving God, the God of peace, and He is our Lord, the one who has supreme authority over every aspect of our lives, then we don’t have to worry. He will provide for us. He will watch over us. He will protect us. He will guide us. And, He will keep all His promises. What is there to worry about?

### **Application**

Worry is nothing more than lack of trust. No matter what your circumstances, God is there beside you and will take care of you. Work hard and trust in Him. If you do, there's nothing to worry about, is there?

## 2 Thessalonians 3:17 - Read Your Bible

The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every letter; so I write.

### Truth to Learn

We must read the Bible to learn God's message to us.

### Behind the Words

*Aspasmos* is the Greek word translated as “salutation.” It is based on *aspodzomai*, which means “to salute.” Thus, *aspasmos* refers to “a salutation or greeting.”

The expression “with my own hand” is from *tē emē cheiri*, which literally means “by me the hand.” The word order in Greek indicates that Paul is emphasizing the fact that it was done with his own hand.

The word “sign” is *sēmion*, which refers to “a sign, a mark, or a miracle with a spiritual end and purpose.” It is commonly used to indicate a signature or mark of a person's identity. In the gospels and other places in the New Testament, this word is also used to indicate a miraculous occurrence that is given as a sign of God's mighty power.

### Meaning Explained

Most of the Apostle Paul's letters were written by an amanuensis (a scribe), who did the physical writing of what Paul dictated. We see distinct evidence of this in his letter to the church at Rome:

I, Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, greet you in the Lord. (**Romans 16:22**)

One possible reason for him using a scribe is that Paul may have had a problem with his vision. In **Galatians 6:11** he said,

See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!

Note that the word translated “letters” (the Greek word *gramma*), could also refer to an entire epistle, but since we know of only one letter that he wrote to the Galatians, it is reasonable to assume that he was referring to the size of his lettering, not the size of the epistle. If Paul did, in fact, have a problem with his vision, it would explain why he used a scribe.

Paul put a similar statement of a salutation from his own hand in his letters to other churches (**1 Corinthians 16: 21**).

But, why would Paul indicate that this letter was from him and not a forgery? You may recall, back in **2 Thessalonians 2:2** he said the following:

not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us ...

It was not uncommon during the early years of the Church for letters to be written to other believers in which the writer claimed to be Paul, Peter, John, or another of the apostles. For this reason, and because the subject matter of this letter is so vital in correcting false teaching, Paul gave irrefutable proof that this was a genuine letter from him.

### Application

What we have in the Bible today is God's word, revealing Himself to us. He used many different human authors, but they were all controlled by the Holy Spirit so that their writing is inspired (God breathed). What we do with God's Word is up to us. We cannot live a fruitful Christian life if we don't read it regularly and put into practice what He tells us. Read your Bible, my friend. Read your Bible. Read your Bible!

## 2 Thessalonians 3:18 - Our Master's Grace

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

### Truth to Learn

Jesus Christ is our gracious Lord and Master. He owns us.

### Behind the Words

“Grace” is translated from the Greek noun *charis*, which is from the verb *chairō*, meaning “to rejoice.” Therefore, we see that *charis* is “that which causes joy, pleasure, gratification, or acceptance as a result of a kindness granted.” It is often translated as grace, thanks, or gratitude.

The word “Lord” is from *kurios*, which is based on *kuros*, meaning “might, power, or control.” *Kurios* refers to someone who has supreme authority or control over someone else.

*Christos* is the word transliterated “Christ,” which is based on the verb *chriō*, meaning “to anoint.” Thus, *christos* literally means “the anointed one.” It is equivalent to the Hebrew word *mashiach*, or Messiah.

The word “amen” is transliterated from the Hebrew word *‘āmēn*, meaning “to be trustworthy, steady, or firm.” It is often translated as “truth,” “verily,” or “it is so.” It is usually appended to the end of a prayer or a hymn. There is some evidence that this word was not included in Paul’s original letter. Some manuscripts have it and others don’t.

Also, some manuscripts have the following appended to the end of this letter, “To *the* Thessalonians, a second *letter* written from Athens.”

### Meaning Explained

Paul closes this letter with his typical salutation of grace. Probably more than any other characteristic of God, Paul is ever mindful of God’s grace toward us. Every single letter of Paul’s ends with a reminder of God’s grace. In fact, the only other writings of the New Testament that end with a mention of God’s grace are Hebrews (which some people believe was written by Paul), 2 Peter, and Revelation. For this reason, it is possible that the “sign” that Paul referred to in the previous verse may be this closing benediction. It appears to be a signature or “sign” of the authenticity of this letter from the Apostle Paul.

God’s grace, as shown in our salvation and the many blessings that result from it, should serve as a constant reminder to us that without it we are dead in our sins (**Ephesians 2:1**) and destined to receive the wrath of God. It is only by God’s grace that we who deserve eternity in hell being separated from the love of God, should receive His merciful and priceless salvation. With this comes fellowship with Him while on this earth and the promise of eternity in His presence bathed in His love. A thorough understanding of God’s grace should cause every Christian to humbly fall before our Lord with gratitude and thanksgiving.

But, Paul tells us something else here about God’s grace. It is “**the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.**” This could also be translated as “the grace from our Lord Jesus Christ.” Grace comes, not simply from the godhead (all three persons), but specifically from the second person of the godhead, our Lord Jesus Christ. And Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is not just our God, but our Lord. Jesus Christ has purchased us with his blood (**Revelation 5:9**). We do not own ourselves,

we were bought by, and now are owned by, Jesus Christ (**1 Corinthians 6:19, 20**). He is our owner, our Lord, and our Master.

### **Application**

By the grace of God, we will not get what we deserve (eternity in hell); instead, we will get what we don't deserve (eternal salvation). Let us all fall on our faces with humble thanksgiving and gratitude, and let us strive to do the will of Him who owns us – our Lord Jesus Christ.