

## 2 Thessalonians 3 • Practical Christianity

### Introduction

In both his letters to the Thessalonians, Paul's teaching of the Second Coming is presented not just merely as a doctrine or something interesting to study, but as a truth that is intended to grip our lives and make us better Christians. It is not enough to know about His Second Coming or to believe it; we are supposed to live and practice it in daily life. In both letters it is notable how Paul concludes with exhortations which reveal how such Last Days Christians who incorporate this belief into their life should live and behave. The question is whether or not this is the way in which we, indeed, are living. In this closing chapter Paul provides three practical admonitions for the true Believer.

<sup>1</sup>Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; <sup>2</sup>and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. <sup>3</sup>But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. <sup>4</sup>We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. <sup>5</sup>May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

### [Read v.1-5]

**Q: What is the basic quality or behavior encouraged here?**

A: Prayer and patience.

**Q: Is it just general prayer which is being suggested?**

A: Paul mentions two specific areas of focus for prayer:

1. "...that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified..." (v.1)
2. "...that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men..." (v.2)

**Application:** It is a calling to first and foremost contend for the ministry of the Gospel. This aligns precisely with what Jesus identified in the Olivet Discourse as a priority for Believers in the Last Days, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world". (Mt. 24:14) Christians don't hide in a bunker until it's over but continue to take the Gospel "even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8), **especially** when time is running out.

**Q: Why do we need to pray for rescue from "perverse and evil men"?**

A: The fact is that Satan is at work in the world and the reality is that spiritual forces are at work in order to halt entirely or mitigate to the greatest degree possible those who would share God's Word. There will be those who oppose us.

**Q: So how does v.3 relate to the issue of the working of "perverse and evil men"?**

A: We cannot trust men but we can trust our faithful God to provide strength and protection.

**Point:** Note that these are qualities necessary for enduring trial and hardship, not for avoiding or negating them.

**Q: How does v.4 reveal what is expected to accompany our prayer?**

A: "...that you are doing and will continue to do what we command" means to be personally living God's Word. God's messenger must himself be putting the message into practice.

**Q: How does v.5 provide insight into the essential components of patience?**

A: It comes from a heart focused not on self but on "the love of God" – a personal relationship exclusively committed to Him, and "the steadfastness of Christ" – the personal example who never wavered in His earthly example of obedience to the Word and love of the Father.

[Continued on the next page.]

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

— John 14:23

**Application:** Where there is a true and loving personal relationship with Christ, there will be patience and hope, the kind of hope which lives to share His Word in spite of the earthly circumstances because they live for what is important beyond the confines of this life. It is a life which is prayerful and patient in pursuit of the Gospel.

<sup>6</sup>Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. <sup>7</sup>For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, <sup>8</sup>nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; <sup>9</sup>not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. <sup>10</sup>For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. <sup>11</sup>For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. <sup>12</sup>Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. <sup>13</sup>But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.

### [Read v.6-13]

**Q: Is Paul telling us not to associate with sinners like the Pharisees admonished Jesus?**

A: Paul is not talking about the unsaved here, but "every brother who leads an unruly life" (v.6) He is speaking to the issue of those who claim the label "Christian" but by whose conduct it would be impossible to actually prove they are "Christian".

**Q: What is the definition of "an unruly life"? By what is it proven?**

A: It is someone who behaves "not according to the tradition which you received from us". (v.6) In other words, it is someone who neither lives according to the Word of God preached to them nor by the personal example of their teachers.

**Q: What is the key word in v.7 which identifies someone who is "unruly"?**

A: "Undisciplined".

**Q: How is this further described in v.11?**

A: As "doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies". They were neither contributing to nor participating in the ministry of the Gospel. They were neither spiritual examples to their brothers and sisters in Christ nor to the unsaved to whom they ceased to bring the Gospel.

*But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.*

— James 1:25

**Q: What apparently happened in Thessalonica? Why were there so many bums?**

A: Apparently they reasoned that if Jesus was coming back soon that they ought to give up their jobs and just wait around for Him to return.

**Q: How is such behavior a drain on the Church's resources?**

A: They drain the Church's physical resources by requiring care and attention not needed which would normally go to those with true issues, and they drain the Church's spiritual resources because they not only become a burden to the Church but are no longer effective in the ministries and activities of the Church. It discourages the faithful Christians present and creates a bad testimony to the unsaved.

**Q: What is the practical effect of Christians who live normal lives? How does this actually serve as a visible witness of their faith?**

A: By continuing to work and live normally they show they have no fear of what is to come and in fact are trusting Christ in all things. The proof of

their faith in the “big” thing – His Return, is their faith in the “little” things – to work and live in everyday confidence in Christ.

**Q: Why does Paul provide the admonition to “not grow weary of doing good”?**

A: Believers are going to be faced not just with the problems of “*perverse and evil men*” (v.2) – obstacles presented by the world, but they will face obstacles within the Church. Satan attacks from both within and without in the course of this life.

**Application:** *A Christian who truly believes in the imminent Return of Christ continues to live as a biblical example as much to fellow Believers as to the unsaved. They are visible testimonies of their faith in Christ and the Gospel by living by faith and not in fear of what is to come either in this life or the next.*

**[Read v.14-18]**

<sup>14</sup>If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. <sup>15</sup>Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

<sup>16</sup>Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!

<sup>17</sup>I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. <sup>18</sup>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

**Q: How might Paul’s final punctuation to be obedient to the Word be particularly relevant to the Thessalonians?**

A: In his letters to them, Paul paid particular attention to affirming their attitude toward the Word of God and how they had not just merely heard it but put it into practice.

*for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,*  
— 1 Thessalonians 1:5–6

*For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.*  
— 1 Thessalonians 2:13

*So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.*  
— 2 Thessalonians 2:15

**Q: Is Paul talking about official church discipline where undisciplined Believers are concerned?**

A: No, this is not like the situation in 1 Co. 5, but rather the personal corrective action to be undertaken by individual members of the Church.

**Q: What is the keyword which indicates how this is to be pursued?**

A: “*Admonish*”. (v.14) In fact, it is admonishment which is further qualified not as an enemy but “*as a brother*”. It is the application of how Paul tells the Ephesians it should be undertaken, “*speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ*”. (Eph. 4:15)

**Application:** *Every member of the Body of Christ has the responsibility of holding each other personally accountable; it is not the sole purview of leadership. We are to not only personally hear the Word and do it, but to hold each other mutually accountable for same.*

## **Overall Application**

*Notice that the most important issue for Last Days Believers is the same as for Believers of every Church age: the Word.*

- *In v. 1-5 Paul encourages prayer for the continued preaching of the Word.*
- *In v. 6-13 Paul encourages a life that is a visible testimony by its disciplined obedience to the Word.*
- *In v. 14-18 Paul encourages mutual accountability to the Word.*

*What is it that Jesus will be looking for upon His Return?*

*"...However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"*

*— Luke 18:8b*

*Where does faith come from? How will it be proven?*

*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

*— Romans 10:17*