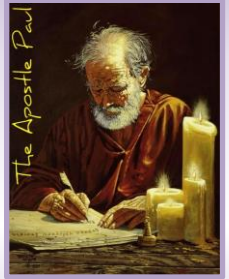


# THESSALONIANS

## There Is Hope!



### Lesson 13: Living Hope ... [2 THESSALONIANS 3:1-18]

#### PREVIEW

Paul asks the Thessalonian saints to withdraw from association with unruly believers who are not working but are spending their time bothering others in the assembly. These disorderly believers (BUSYBODIES) should be admonished to work hard for their own upkeep and follow the example of the apostle in the matter. Paul signs his name, extending blessing to the Thessalonians in the hope that they might experience God's grace and peace.

#### PRAY FOR US: 2 THESSALONIANS 3:1-5

Paul constantly asked other Christians to PRAY FOR him (Romans 15:30, 2 Corinthians 1:11, Ephesians 6:18-19, Philippians 1:19, Colossians 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:25, and Philemon 22). Paul knew that the success of his ministry depended on the prayers of God's people.

We see in verse 1, Paul's great concern - *what he first asked the Thessalonian believers to pray for* - was that God's word be free to do its work among others, even as it had among the Thessalonians (JUST AS IT IS WITH YOU).

Paul asked for prayer so that the word can RUN freely, without any hindrance. Paul's prayer request makes us wonder how often the work of God's word is hindered by our prayerlessness. God has promised that His word would be free and perform its work: Isaiah 55:11

**11** So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

--- Isaiah 55:11 ... NKJV

But as with many of God's promises, we are expected to take this promise in faith, and ask God to perform it for His honor and glory.

In verse 2 there is a reference to UNREASONABLE AND WICKED MEN; these were those who wanted to hinder the spread of the gospel by Paul and the Thessalonian believers. These would include the fanatical Jewish opponents at Corinth, the antagonists of Acts 17:5-9, Paul's bitter opponents at Berea (Acts 17:13-15) and even

as he was writing this letter, the same threatening attitude Paul was experiencing at Corinth. Note that Paul's prayer was for God to either (1) deliver him from such men, or (2) change them into reasonable and godly men (new creatures in Christ).

In verse 3 Paul states that even if NOT ALL men HAVE FAITH, THE LORD IS FAITHFUL. This is the basis of Paul's CONFIDENCE in God's ability to ESTABLISH and GUARD US FROM THE EVIL ONE. God promises to keep Satan (THE EVIL ONE) on a leash. In addition, God promises to not allow any temptation to become too great for us (1 Corinthians 10:13). God will not allow Satan to do whatever he wants with us (Luke 22:31-32).

In verse 4 we see Paul was also confident (IN THE LORD) regarding the Thessalonians themselves, that they would follow through and be obedient to God's word (THAT YOU DO AND WILL DO THE THINGS WE COMMAND YOU). This shows that God's work of establishing and guarding us is done, in part, through His appeal to our will in obeying His word. God doesn't just pour spiritual maturity and stability into His followers. He works it in us through our cooperation with His will.

**13** for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. --- Philippians 2:13 ... NKJV

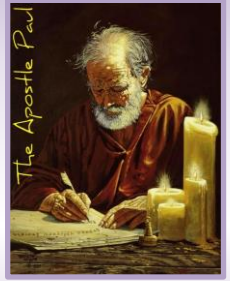
Paul prays that God will direct the Thessalonian believers' HEARTS into both LOVE and PATIENCE (ENDURANCE). These are two qualities (LOVE and PATIENCE) that are essential for the kind of spiritual stability and strength the Thessalonians needed.

#### WARNING AGAINST IDLENESS: 2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-15

In verse 6, Paul issues a command for believers – *not a suggestion* – IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. The command is to WITHDRAW FROM EVERY BROTHER WHO WALKS DISORDERLY. The purpose in withdrawing from the disobedient was not so much punishment, but more to deny them the aid and comfort of the fellowship of the body of Christ until they repented. It put them out of the church into the "domain" of Satan (the world); in

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hope that they might miss the fellowship of the church so much they would repent of their disobedience. Paul echoed the same idea in 1 Corinthians 5:4-5. The purpose was to bring about repentance and salvation in the disobedient ones, not to condemn or damn them. In an indirect way, Paul showed his vision for the church; a place of love and comfort; separation from it leads to deprivation. Notice that Paul does not deny the disorderly are believers (BRETHREN), but he stresses they must be censured. Paul defined the disorderly as those who did NOT walk ACCORDING TO THE TRADITION (the pattern of teaching and living) Paul and the apostles gave to them; these are the BUSYBODIES referenced in verse 11.

In verses 7-9, the Thessalonians are encouraged to follow Paul in his example of both hard work and willingness to sacrifice for the furtherance and integrity of the gospel.

In verse 10, Paul states that IF ANYONE WILL NOT WORK (notice "WILL NOT" instead of "cannot" WORK), NEITHER SHALL HE EAT. God's plan is to provide for our needs through our WORK. God created Adam and put him to WORK in the Garden! WORK is a privilege as well as a responsibility. Since God is able to provide our needs in any manner imaginable, it means something that He has chosen (*for the most part*) to meet our needs through WORK. Deliberate loafers (the DISORDERLY) must not be supported out of a false sense of charity; this is an abuse of Acts 2:44-46; 4:32-35.

In verse 11, Paul calls out the BUSYBODIES. For these DISORDERLY believers, their idleness had become a source of sin in their lives and it was not only because of the work that they didn't do, but also because of the harm they did do with their idle time (BUT ARE BUSYBODIES).

In verse 12, with all authority, THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, Paul exhorts the busybodies to (1) WORK, (2) mind their own business (IN QUIETNESS) and (3) provide for their own needs (EAT THEIR OWN BREAD) instead of expecting other believers to provide for them.

Note the early church did provide for the truly needy among them, but only after being certain that they were truly needy and after putting them to work for the church (1 Timothy 5:3-16).

In verse 13, Paul encourages the BRETHREN, DO NOT GROW WEARY IN DOING GOOD. This was a proper encouragement for those who were working as they should. Few things are more wearying than seeing others take advantage of Christian generosity. But we should never let the manipulations of some discourage us from DOING GOOD to the truly needy. There are many excuses one might make to allowing weariness in DOING GOOD, but they should all be rejected.

In verses 14-15, Paul continues with his command to WITHDRAW; to NOTE THAT PERSON, AND DO NOT KEEP COMPANY WITH HIM, with the purpose of causing him to be ashamed. Note this purpose is not to make him AN ENEMY of the church, but through the severity of the withdrawal from fellowship, to warn and ADMONISH HIM AS an erring BROTHER. The ultimate goal is not exclusion but reformation.

#### BENEDICTION: 2 THESSALONIANS 3:16-18

Paul's blessing of PEACE (ALWAYS IN EVERY WAY) was appropriate for the believers who were experiencing both persecution and tribulation. It is the presence of the LORD OF PEACE that will grant them this PEACE.

For Paul, God's GRACE was the beginning and the end of the believer's life. It was appropriate then that this letter - *as most of his letters* - began and ended with a mention of GRACE. Notice the inclusive "ALL", in verse 18; Paul's prayer for grace was for ALL, even those he was compelled to correct.

WHEN WE PUT  
OUR PROBLEMS IN  
GOD'S HANDS,  
HE PUTS HIS PEACE IN  
OUR HEARTS.