

13. 2 Thessalonians 3

In the first letter, Paul presented detailed information about the second coming of the Lord, emphasizing that no one knows the time or place in 1 Thess 5:1-3:

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

Evidently some did not accept this teaching and stopped working, waiting for the Lord to come—a situation that sparked Paul's final command in this chapter. He had also taught them to remain industrious in their present lives in 1 Thess 4:11-12:

11 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

The two former statements govern Paul's direction to them in this final chapter.

Final Prayer

2 Thess 3:1-5

3 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. 2 And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. 4 We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

The points of Paul's prayer are applicable to saints today, as the church suffers similarly difficult times.

1. Pray for the message of the Lord.
2. Pray to be delivered from evil and wicked men.
3. Look to the Lord for strength and protection from the evil one.
4. Pray for the Lord's help in keeping the commandments.
5. Pray for the Lord to direct our hearts.

The direction that we wish to always go is into God's love and Christ's perseverance. This is a prayer for all time for the people of God.

Final Command

2 Thess 3:6-10

6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

Paul's command is to stay away from idle brothers and sisters. Paul had clearly taught them this principle already, now he cites himself and his cohorts as an example: for they were not idle when they were with them. Even though Paul and his companions had the right to forgo work, they did not exercise it, so that they might be a model to the church. He also had laid down a fundamental rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

2 Thess 3:11-13

11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.

The idle had become busybodies. Paul's urgent plea was for them to settle down and earn their food.

How to Take Special Note of the Disobedient

2 Thess 3:14-15

4 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

There are two passages that reinforce this instruction. The first speaks to how special note is taken in 1 Cor 5:2-5:

Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? . . . 4 When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, 5 hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

The second speaks to the attitude that we must have while trying to restore the fallen brother in Gal 6:1:

6 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

Salutation

2 Thess 3:16-18

16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

17 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.

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

Paul closes with a prayer that they may receive the peace and Grace of the Lord.