

2 Thessalonians 1:1-3

2 Thes. 1:1 “Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;”

“Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:” Paul according to his writing custom began by identifying the writer or writers and to whom the letter was addressed. This was, of course, Paul’s second letter to the church at Thessalonica. Also, according to Paul’s custom he credited God as being the reason of the church he addressed as he said they were in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. All true churches are in God our Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” According to Paul’s custom he began his letters with the salutation of God’s grace and peace, citing God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as the source of that grace and peace.

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;” In his first letter to the church at Thessalonica Paul spoke of their work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope. At the time of Paul’s first letter this church manifested to others their faith, love and hope. They manifest these things to such a degree that they were examples to the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

Now Paul speaks of the fact that their faith growth exceedingly. In this the church at Thessalonica is an example to the Lord’s churches in all ages. It should be a truth to all the Lord’s churches that each church would have a desire and strive so that their faith would grow exceedingly.

This brings us to ask the following questions:

1. Where did our faith come from?
2. What is faith?
3. What is required for our faith to grow?

In answer to the first question our faith comes from the Lord. As the scriptures teach that Jesus is the author (initiator) and finisher (completer) of our faith: Heb. 12:2 “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,

despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Moreover faith is a part of the ninefold fruit of the spirit as stated to us in Gal. 5:22, 23: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”* Faith comes as a result of the spiritual birth. Before a person is born of the Spirit he does not have faith.

Next, we pause to make a distinction between “the faith” and our individual faith. At least 20 times in the New Testament we read of “the faith.” “The faith” is that teaching of doctrine and practice set forth in the New Testament for the Lord’s church on earth. Jude told us: *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”*

In contrast, the faith we receive when we are born of the Spirit enables us to believe and to seek God. Faith’s connection to the gospel is set forth in Rom. 1:16, 17: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”* Here we are told that the righteousness of God is revealed from one person who has faith to another person who has faith. In this example faith serves as both a transmitter and a receiver of the word of God. The word of God is transmitted from one person who has faith to another person who has faith and the receiver is to live by faith.

We can conclude that faith is more than just believing the word of God but also living by the word of God and trusting in the Lord and his word.

Now we ask, “What is required for our faith to grow?” The principle of growth in faith is similar and comparable to the growth of muscles in our bodies. An infant has the same number of muscles as a mature body builder. The muscles of the body builder are much stronger and larger than the muscles of the infant. There are at least two simple and basic requirements for the infant’s muscles to grow and he later become and have the strength of the body builder. Those two requirements are good nutrition and exercise, especially, exercise against resistance.

Growth in faith spiritually can be compared to the physical growth of muscles. First there is the need of good nutrition. For the child of God to grow in faith exceedingly he must have applied himself to the study, reading, hearing, and meditation upon the scriptures. This is the best spiritual nutrition for a child of God.

Second the growth in faith requires the exercise of our faith and especially exercise against resistance. Without resistance our faith would not grow much. If our faith was never put to the test then how would we or others know that we even have faith. James said: James 2:18 *“Yea, a*

man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."

The church at Thessalonica was undergoing much persecution and affliction as we read in 1 Thes. 2:14-16: *"For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."* Also, verse 4 of this letter speaks of their persecutions and afflictions.

Persecutions, afflictions, trials, and temptations are the resistance by which if we exercise our faith, then our faith will grow. Please notice the following verses:

1. Rom. 5:3-5: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

2. James 1:2-4: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

3. 1 Pet. 1:5-7: "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:"

There are many examples in the Old Testament of the growth of the patriarch's faith through persecutions, afflictions, trials, and temptations.

Next, Paul speaks of the charity of each member of the church at Thessalonica toward each other abounding. When our faith grows, one way it is manifest is by our charity abounding. It has been my observation that the individuals whose faith is growing are usually the individuals whose charity abounds. A great example of this is found in 2 Corinthians, chapter 8 concerning the churches of Macedonia. 2 Cor. 8:1 *"Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; 4 Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the*

ministering to the saints. 5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. 6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.” The members of the church at Macedonia were undergoing a great trial of affliction and were in deep poverty, yet, this trial of their faith abounded unto the riches of their liberality which manifested their charity abounding towards the needy saints who had less than they did.

2 Thessalonians 1:4-10

2 Thes. 1:4 “So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: 5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: 6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; 7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.”

“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:” Sometimes we will hear people say that we are not to glory in anything but in the Lord. Well that is true when it comes to the things that God has done and especially in his work of saving us from our sins. The word, glory, appears 177 times in the New Testament and all but a small handful of times it is speaking about the glory of God or giving glory to God. However, the word, glory, primarily means boast but on occasion the word depending on the context means praise. An example that most people would recognize is that when the preacher is blessed to deliver a sermon that stirs us up and/or answers questions that we may have we may give praise to the preacher by saying to him how much we enjoyed the sermon. So applying the principle to the verse above Paul is saying that he was praising the members of the church in Thessalonica for their patience and faith in all their persecutions and tribulations that they endured.

“Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:” A “manifest token” is a “visible indication.” Thus the patience and faith of the members of the church in Thessalonica in all their persecutions and tribulations is a visible indication of the righteous judgment of God in that God had counted them worthy of the kingdom of God for which they suffered those things and yet remained faithful to God and His word.

“Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;” When we suffer persecutions and tribulations it is the reaction of our flesh nature to seek revenge. However, we are told that it is not up to us to seek vengeance: Rom. 12:19 “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” Since God has taught us that vengeance is His, then it is indeed a “righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;” God is a just and holy God and will execute his wrathful judgment when it is needed.

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels...” The time that the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with his holy angels is the time of his second coming in the resurrection of the dead. When he comes among the things He will do is take vengeance: **“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:”** Those who know not God are those who were not chosen in Christ before the world began and who were not quickened to spiritual life by the Holy Spirit. Of course these will also not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, it is also a righteous thing for the Lord to take vengeance upon them as their sin debt was not paid for them on the cross. Their punishment is stated as follows: **“Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”** This punishment is everlasting and involves them being cast into the lake of fire of God’s judgment and suffering everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.

In contrast concerning the elect Paul said this: “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.” One of the evidences of the gracious state of the elect is that they believe in that day.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

2 Thes. 1:11 “Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: 12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“Wherefore also we pray always for you...” There are several reasons that we pray for other people. We pray for their well being; we pray giving thanks for them and their labors; we pray for their needs; we pray the Lord direct them and give them the things they need to better serve

him; etc. In the above Paul prayed first of all that God would count them worthy of this calling. The calling in regeneration is of the Lord and is a perfect work creating an inner man that cannot sin. Thus, the calling here is not the calling in regeneration. It is a calling to service. The gospel calls the Lord people to repent and serve the Lord. If we are serving the Lord according to the teaching of his word and with our whole heart, soul, and mind and strength, then we are proving ourselves worthy of this calling.

Moreover, Paul gives us an example for prayer. Paul didn't just pray one or two times and say that is another prayer for this purpose. Rather Paul stated that we pray always for you. This teaches us that we should pray for one another that the Lord continually bless the Lord's people in the church in their labors and that the labors of the Lord's people would be worthy of the calling to serve the Lord. This prayer should be continual for the Lord's people in his churches.

“fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:” In praying for the Lord's people at Thessalonica Paul prayed to God that they might “fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness.” A key word in this verse is the word “all.” We should strive to fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness and not just some of the good pleasure of his goodness. We are not to be part time or partial disciples. We live in a society of “pick and choose” religion, i.e., people want to pick and choose what they want to do in serving the Lord. When it comes to serving the Lord we should remember that we are His servants and not just co-workers with the Lord.

Moreover, we are to “fulfil the work of faith with power.” As we have previously set forth in previous essays faith is manifest by work. By faith we put our hands to the plow and not look back but rather set forth to accomplish the work the Lord has given for us to accomplish. Sometimes we feel ourselves unable to accomplish the task the Lord may have given us. It is here that we must rely on the power (ability and strength) of the Holy Spirit to enable us to do what we feel unable to do.

“That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The word “Lord” speaks of God being our Master and we His servants. The word “Jesus” speaks to God being our Savior. The name “Christ” speaks to God being our King and High Priest.” Matt. 5:16 *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”* By living our life according to the teaching of God's word and according to the leadership of the Spirit of God we will accomplish the good works that the Lord has created us for and glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in ourselves and him in us. Of course, this all happens according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

2 Thes. 2:1 “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

The setting of a text is very important for us to know in order that we may know what is being talked about. First, we ask ourselves, “What coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” is the apostle referring to? In the first chapter Paul in verses 7-10 alluded to the time of the Lord’s second coming to take his children home and to execute judgment upon those who are not his: 2 Thes. 1:7-10 *“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.”* This is obviously the Lord’s coming in the morning of the resurrection of the dead both of the just and the unjust. Moreover, in the above text Paul ties together his coming with the saints “gathering together unto him.”

Clearly we can conclude that Paul is not addressing the coming in timely judgment against the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Furthermore, the church at Thessalonica was primarily a church made up mostly of Gentile believers. Thus, the destruction of Jerusalem at 70 A.D. would not have had significance to them.

Moreover, many people have held the belief that the apostles thought that the Lord was returning in their day. However, this passage of scripture does not support that idea. Plainly Paul is setting forth that the day of the Lord was not at hand at that time and for the disciples at Thessalonica

were not to be troubled either by spirit or by word or by letter from him that the day of the Lord was at hand.

However, Paul did give us some clues as to the circumstances that would be present when that day will be at hand. First, there would be a falling away first. Here we have to be careful, because there has been a falling away of some in every generation. For instance, none of the churches that Paul wrote epistles to exist today, nor any of the churches mentioned by John in Revelations chapters 2 and 3 are in existence today. They all fell away. This has been the history of the Lord's church throughout the ages. The church has died out in locations only to spring up in other locations. When we see the falling away of the Old Baptists in the United States, we must remember that at one time there was a very strong contingent of Old Baptists in England and Wales before there were any Old Baptist churches in the United States. Additionally as we observe a continually falling away of the Lord's churches in the United States, we see an establishing of the Lord's churches in the Philippines and in Africa for instance. The above text implies there would be a general falling away from the faith throughout.

The next circumstance Paul alludes to is the revealing of that man of sin known as the son of perdition. A general search of the scriptures concerning the "son of perdition" yields only Judas Iscariot as being called the "son of perdition." Obviously the above text is not pointing to Judas Iscariot. The word, perdition, means destruction. Thus, the man to whom Paul is referring would be associated with destruction. The key to our understanding is the phrase, "**Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped;**" There is a general theme in the scriptures of the goals of Satan and of kingdom builders.

The goals or desires of Satan are set forth for us in Isaiah 14:12 *"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."* The desire of Satan or Lucifer is set forth for us in the form of five "I wills" showing us what Satan is trying to accomplish.

The first is *"I will ascend into heaven."* This is consistent with the doctrine the serpent set forth in the Garden of Eden when he told the woman, *"Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."* Thus, he said to the woman that by an act of the creature the creature could attain to be like God. This is also the doctrine of most of the religious world today. They believe that by an act of will or action that man can attain to eternal life. This is a satanic doctrine and is a lie. The truth is that eternal life is the gift of God and the creature cannot do anything to get it.

The second is *"I will exalt my throne above the stars of God."* This shows forth the desire of Satan to reign over the stars of God. In the scriptures, the "stars" frequently depict God's children. It is Satan's desire to reign as a King over the children of God. In order for Satan to reign over the children of God, he must convince them that he is the true King and that they should obey him in his kingdom. This requires much subtlety and deception.

The third is *"I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north."* In the scriptures, Mount Zion is known as the "mount of the congregation." We read about the "sides of the north" in Ps. 48: *"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King."* The "sides of the north" are therefore, "the city of the great King." The church is known as the "city of God." Satan desires to sit at the top of the kingdom of God and be worshipped by the Lord's church. Again, this can only happen where people are deceived and believe that Satan is God.

The fourth is *"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds."* In the scriptures, the clouds are associated with the glory of God. It is Satan's desire that he have more glory than God does in that he desires to ascent "above" the heights of the clouds, which depict the glory of God. Again, this is done through subtlety, as God's children would not glorify Satan unless they believed Satan to be God.

The fifth is *"I will be like the most High."* The obstacle that Satan has in being like the most High is that Satan is a fallen creature and God is the creator. Satan is also an imitator. He uses the mirror image principle to be like the most High.

I will illustrate the mirror image principle by using myself as an example. When I look in the mirror in the morning, I see what at first glance appears to be the almost perfect image of myself. However, the image in the mirror is the closest to being the exact opposite of me. My left ear in the mirror is my right ear. My left eye in the mirror is my right eye. Everything in the mirror is exactly opposite of me.

In order for Satan to attempt to accomplish his five "I wills" he must use fallen man. I will attempt to show how Satan works according to the scriptures using fallen man in trying to accomplish his goals in the next several essays.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

2 Thes. 2:13 "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the

glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. 16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, 17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work."

"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:" Some have thought this verse to teach that this is the way that God chooses people to be his people. Some in an effort to make this verse say something that it does not teach go further and say that God looked down through time and determined who would believe him and then he chose them to be his.

God did indeed look down through time upon the children of men, but this is what he saw recorded for us in Ps. 14:2, 3 *"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* Thus, the idea that God looked down through time and chose those that would believe the gospel to be his is destroyed by what we read in Ps. 14:2, 3. Before a person can believe and obey the gospel, he must first be born of the Spirit. Thus, the gospel cannot be a means of being born of the Spirit.

In 2 Thes. 2:13, the subject is "God." The verb is "hath chosen." The object to which they were chosen is "salvation." The means through which God chose them was **"through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."** Therefore, the ones chosen to this salvation were first born of the Spirit and believed the truth. They were born of the Spirit and believed the truth as a cause for God choosing them. Obviously the salvation to which they were chosen cannot be the New Birth. It was through the Spirit sanctifying them (New Birth) and their belief of the truth that they were chosen to salvation. It stands to reason that you cannot be chosen of God to be born again through the Spirit causing you to be born again and then you believing the truth. Yet, if the salvation in 2 Thes. 2:13 is the New or spiritual birth, then the sentence would be non-sense.

Rather than the New Birth, the salvation in 2 Thes 2:13 is deliverance (salvation) into the service and true worship of God. The only ones who can truly serve and worship God in Spirit and in truth are those who are already born of the Spirit and then believed the truth. When an individual, who has been born of the Spirit, hears and believes the gospel and then obeys the gospel, he is chosen of God to carry on the service and true worship of God in the gospel Kingdom of God. God from the beginning of their hearing, believing, and obeying the gospel, chose them to be delivered (saved) to the true worship and service of God through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

This is in contrast to the many of God's children who do not ever hear the gospel. In addition,

there are many who do hear the gospel yet do not believe the gospel, but rather are captured into a perverted gospel and false worship system. Also, there are those who hear and believe the true gospel of Jesus Christ, but who do not obey the gospel and submit themselves to water baptism and the service and true worship of God in his church kingdom here on earth. None of these is chosen of God to carry on the true worship and service of God in his church kingdom. Only those who believed and obeyed the truth are chosen to carry on in the true worship and service of God in his church kingdom.

“Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The gospel call brings knowledge to the child of God that God has made him righteous before God through grace by the atoning blood of Christ.

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” Not all traditions are bad. Actually some traditions are good. The traditions that we hold to should not be the traditions of men, but rather the traditions taught in the word of God. For instance, the ordinances of baptism; the communion service; and the ordinations of men to the offices of bishop and deacon should be taught and held to by the Lord’s church throughout all ages.

“Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.” The same Lord that has saved us from our sins and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace according to His covenant promises is the same Lord that comforts our hearts and establishes us in every good word and work. Without Him we can do nothing.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

2 Thes 3:1 “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: 2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.”

Paul asked the church members at Thessalonica to pray for the ministry. We note that Paul’s request was very specific. Often times we will ask people to pray for us but without any specifics. However that is usually not the case in Paul’s writings. He asked for specific things when he asked people to pray for him or for others.

The first thing Paul asked the church to pray for was **“that the word of the Lord may have free course...”** There are so many obstacles to the word of the Lord having free course. Some times

persecutors and false teachers and false teachers will try to hinder the free course of the word of the Lord. Other times, conditions surrounding people can hinder the free course of the word of the Lord. Many times, only the Lord can remove the hindrances. Thus there is a great need to pray that the Lord would remove the hindrances to the free course of the word of the Lord.

The second thing Paul asked the church to pray for was “that the word of the Lord may...**be glorified, even as it is with you.**” One of the meanings of the word glorified is “to be held in very high esteem.” The church at Thessalonica had proved that the word of the Lord was held in very high esteem by their actions in belief in and obedience to the word of the Lord. Likewise, that should be our desire also, that those who hear the word of the Lord would hold it in very high esteem by believing and obeying the teachings therein.

The third thing Paul asked the church to pray for was “**that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.**” This goes contrary to many people’s belief that the word of the Lord must be presented to unreasonable and wicked men in order to give them a chance to believe and accept the Lord and change their behavior and thus be saved from their sins. However, as this verse shows, Paul knew that there were men who did not have faith and therefore, the word of the Lord could not be believed by them. In 1 Cor. 1:18 Paul stated: “*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*” There are two classes of people presented in this verse: those that perish and those that are saved. To those that perish the preaching of the cross is foolishness. To those that perish (not born again of the Spirit) the preaching of the cross is utter foolishness and they will not receive it. In contrast to those of us which are saved (born of the Spirit) the preaching of the cross is the power of God. Paul’s request on his behalf and on behalf of the gospel ministry is that the church pray that the ministry may be delivered from those unreasonable and wicked men as they have not faith and cannot receive the good news of salvation by grace alone.

The above brings us to ask the question: “Where does faith come from?” Faith is a part of the nine fold fruit of the Spirit taught us in Gal. 5:22, 23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” It comes from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: Heb. 12:2 “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;” It was imparted unto us in the spiritual birth.

2 Thessalonians 3:3-5

2 Thes 3:3 “But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we

command you. 5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”

“But the Lord is faithful..” While much could be written on the faithfulness of the Lord, suffice it to say, the Lord is faithful to his promises. He keeps all his promises. We can trust in the faithfulness of the Lord to keep all of his promises. An example of the Lord’s promises is found in Heb. 13:5, 6 *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”*

There are far too many promises that God has given us for me to list in this short writing, so we just list a few:

1. Titus 1:2 *“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;”*

2. John 6:37 *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”*

3. John 17:2 *“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”*

4. 1 Cor. 10:13 *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”*

5. Matt. 11:28 *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”*

“Who shall stablish you...” The word “stablish” here means confirm or strengthen. The Lord confirms and strengthens his faithful disciples. He is our strength when we are weak. Paul wrote in 2 Cor 12:10 *“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”*

“And keep you from evil.” Just how does the Lord keep us from evil? He doesn’t keep evil from opposing us. He doesn’t keep evil things from happening to us. Even Paul was imprisoned and finally beheaded by Nero. However, the Lord does keep evil from being able to overthrow our walk of faith.

“And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.” Paul’s confidence was not in men, but in the Lord. Likewise, our confidence should be in the Lord and not in men. Paul’s confidence was that the Lord would work in the disciples at Thessalonica that they would both have a desire to do and the ability to

do what the Lord would have them do: Phil. 2:13 *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”*

“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.” It is the Lord who both directs our hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ. The attitude often expressed by non-believers that “I am the captain of my ship and the master of my fate”, is not to be the attitude of believers. We are to look for the Lord’s direction in our lives both in who we are to serve and how we are to serve them. Moreover, we are to patiently wait for the Lord’s direction and blessing of our labors.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

2 Thes 3:6 “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.”

We all know that there are individuals who are disabled, who are feeble, who are sick and unable to work, or to which there are no jobs available. This passage is not concerning such who should be supported by those who are able. Rather this passage is directed to those who are able bodied, but are either lazy or refuse to work to provide for their own needs or the needs of their families.

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly...” The disorderly walk is to refuse to work and provide for their own needs or the needs of their families. The command given to the church is to withdraw from them. The church has no responsibility to provide for such individuals.

“And not after the tradition which he received of us.” The tradition Paul is referring to is listed for us in the following verses: **“For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 8 Neither did we eat any man's bread**

for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:” Paul and those ministers who traveled with him set an example or tradition for the disciples in that they labored to provide for their own needs while at the same time laboring in the gospel. Ministers who think they are owed a living by the members of the church and who refuse to work would be guilty of walking disorderly. Now a church can decide if they are able to provide for the needs of the gospel minister and his family so that he can spend all his time in the gospel labors. **“Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.”** Paul and the ministers with him considered it good to set an example or tradition to the disciples, even when they had power or authority to abstain from working.

“For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” When a man has nothing to eat, before long he will most likely change his mind and start working so that he has something to eat.

“For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.” Notice that the men under consideration not only had walked disorderly by not working, but had also become busybodies.

“Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.”

2 Thessalonians 3:13-18

2 Thes 3:13 “But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. 14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. 16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all. 17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

“But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.” What would cause someone to be weary in well doing? First we look at the situation of the Thessalonian church. Paul had commended them for all the good things that they were doing. However, he also pointed out that some would not work and were busy bodies in other peoples’ matters. One of the things that can discourage a person who is busy in well doing is to see others who should be working and sharing the load, being lazy and not helping. Sometimes there are just a few in a church who

are bearing the burdens that need to be borne when the majority in the church seems to be unconcerned in helping with the burdens. This situation can lead to those who are busy becoming discouraged and become weary in well doing. However, we need to remember the Lord's answer to Peter when Peter asked the Lord what he would have John to do. The Lord's answer was *"If I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee. Follow thou me."* Our well doing should not be dependent on whether someone else is carry their share of the load. After all *"we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* We are to *"let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven."* As the Lord said, *"herein is my Father glorified that you bring forth much fruit."*

Another thing that could lead someone to become weary in well doing is when those that we are trying to help show no thankfulness for the help that we have given them. However, at that time we need to consider ourselves. Have we always been thankful for all the good things God has done for us? Let us not be weary in well doing.

"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." A person who is so lazy that he will not work to provide for himself and his family should be avoided for such action so that he may be ashamed of his callous laziness. **"Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."** In many ways we seem to have lost the desire to admonish a brother in this day in which we live. The Lord's church is a family and we are brothers and sisters. We should love one another enough that we would be willing to admonish an erring brother.

"Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means." The Lord is both the giver of peace and the bringer of peace in our lives. He both gives peace and brings peace to us when we are troubled. It should be our desire to live in peace as we journey through this life.

"The Lord be with you all." As a church body we are often during the week separated from being close to all our brothers and sisters. Yet though we are separated from our brothers and sisters in the church, the Lord can be with us all in every second of our lives.

"The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." In every letter that we know that Paul wrote that made its way into the cannon of scripture, Paul closed with the token of mentioning God's grace. So he did with this epistle as well.