

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 11TH - 12TH, 2021 // BOOK OF 2 THESSALONIANS

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

As is often the pattern in many of his letters, Paul concludes 2 Thessalonians by moving from doctrinal instruction to practical Christian living.

- His first instruction to this church is to “pray for us...” (vs. 1a).
- Specifically, Paul asks for prayer that “the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored...” and that “...we may be delivered from wicked and evil men” (vs. 1b, 2).

Paul asks for prayer that God's Word may “run” or “spread quickly”- that it would be free to do its work without any hindrance.

- God has promised that His Word would not return void, and it would accomplish His purposes (Isa. 55:11) - yet we are to take this promise in faith and obedience and ask God in prayer to do it!
- This verse makes us wonder how often the work of God's Word is hindered by our negligence and our prayerlessness.

Paul also asks for prayers of protection from “wicked and evil” men (vs. 2) who may want to hinder the work of the gospel.

- God is able to protect and deliver His saints from any evil, and until He's finished with us here on this earth, nothing can come against us that God doesn't allow for His purposes.
- The Lord is faithful to strengthen and guard us from Satan's attacks (vs. 3).

Satan's desire is for believers to get so discouraged, distracted, deceived, and defiled (by besetting sin) that they'll give up and stop living for the Lord.

- But the Lord is faithful (vs. 3a) - He will not allow any temptation to become too great for us (1 Cor. 10:13) and will not allow Satan to do whatever he wants to with us (Lk. 22:31-32).
- We can have confidence if we belong to Jesus!

We can have confidence that if we truly belong to the Lord, the trajectory of our lives will be moving towards obedience and faithfulness to God (vs. 4).

- The Lord, through the Holy Spirit, will lead and direct us to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ (vs. 5).
- A growing love for God and others and spiritual endurance are marks of maturity for believers.

## DO YOUR WORK (2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-12)

In his 1st letter to the Thessalonian church, Paul had told them to “work with your hands, as we instructed you” (1 Thess. 4:11).

- Idleness might have already been a problem in Thessalonica, but when this was coupled with a false report about the day of the Lord, a major issue had apparently surfaced.
- Some had left their jobs and were living off the generosity of the church (vs. 11).

People who were perfectly capable of earning their own living were mooching off others within the church, taking advantage of others' generosity, and hiding behind this idea of the church being a spiritual family and the imminency of Christ's return.

- The church never is to enable laziness or irresponsibility, and the nearness of Christ's return is never an excuse for inactivity!

## STAY AWAY FROM LAZY PEOPLE (VS.6)

Paul's instruction to this church was to deny those who were lazy, idle, and disobedient the aid and comfort of the fellowship of the church until they repented.

- Not only that, we are affected by the company we keep - this laziness could spread if the guilty parties weren't disassociated with.
- “Bad companions ruin good character” (1 Cor. 15:33) – “show me your friends and I'll show you your future.”

## FOLLOW THE RIGHT KINDS OF EXAMPLES (VS.7-9)

When Paul, Timothy, & Silas planted the church in Thessalonica, they didn't take a ministry salary, even though they had every right to do so (1 Cor. 9:14).

- Paul knew about hard work - he was a tentmaker by trade (Acts 18) and often would support himself as a missionary through his business.
- Apparently, this is what he did in Thessalonica (vs. 7, 1 Thess. 2:9).

Paul lived this kind of lifestyle of hard work, responsibility, and financial independence in Thessalonica in order to not be a burden to them (vs. 8), but also in order to provide them with an “example to imitate” (vs.9).

- What kind of godly examples are you following?
- Who is discipling you and helping you grow in all areas of your life and lifestyle?

## STOP ENABLING OTHERS - TELL THEM TO WORK (VS.10-12)

“If anyone isn't willing to work (not someone who can not work), let him not eat”- God's plan is to provide for our needs through our work.

- We're called to be generous & benevolent, but when we enable someone who refuses to work and be responsible - we're contributing to them staying in a place of poverty, need, and learned helplessness - and that's not loving.

Idle hands are the devil's playthings - people who won't work usually end up getting bored and getting into trouble (vs. 11, “busybodies”).

- All Christians who are able to work are commanded and encouraged in the Lord Jesus Christ to “do their work quietly” and to “earn their own living” (vs. 12).
- It's sometimes hard to show this kind of tough love!

## DON'T GROW WEARY DOING GOOD (2 THESSALONIANS 3:13-18)

To those who were following Paul's instructions and working hard, being responsible, loving people, being generous, and living for the Lord, Paul says, “don't grow weary in doing good” (vs. 13).

- Few things are more wearying than seeing others who aren't doing good things or working hard, making life harder for those who are by taking advantage of their generosity.

Again, Satan's attacks of discouragement are often aimed at believers that are “weary” so that they'll give up and stop living for the Lord.

- If we're spiritually worn out - we might need a spiritual recharge of time in the Word & prayer.
- If we're physically worn out - we need rest, Sabbath, nutrition, exercise, and boundaries.
- If we feel overwhelmed - we need community so that we can share our burdens with others.

In verses 14-15, Paul gives this church further instruction on how to deal with those who are disobedient within this church.

- Don't make him an enemy, but “warn him as a brother” (vs. 15) and withdraw from fellowshiping with him (or her) so that they can repent (vs. 14).

- Sometimes we need to love someone enough to call them out and tell them the truth.

With all of the struggles, challenges, and difficulties facing this church, Paul prays for God to give them peace (vs. 16).

- The Lord's peace is that internal rest and confidence we have from the Holy Spirit that tells us everything is going to be ok when our circumstances might say something different.
- It's the presence of the Lord in our lives that gives us that peace (... the Lord be with you all).

As Paul signs the close of this letter with his own hand to authenticate its message, his final prayer for this church is for “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with them all” (vs. 18).

- God's grace in our lives produces humility - an acknowledgment that we've been blessed beyond measure and we're not worthy of what we've been given.
- God's grace also gives us security and confidence.

## PRAY FOR US (VS.1-5)

- The reason prayer is difficult for so many of us is that it's the most tangible practice of trust and dependence in the Lord.
- In prayer, we are taking our visible problems and bringing them before an unseen God.
- Prayer that honors God is prayer that also seeks God's will above our own (Matt. 6:10) and prays for His priorities (vs. 1-2).
- Prayer is a gift God gives us - through it, He changes us, communes with us, and renews us as we wait on Him in faith (Isa. 40:28-31).
- The Lord is faithful - He will direct our hearts to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ (vs. 5), and we experience those realities of God's presence during times of prayer.

## DO YOUR WORK (VS.6-12)

- The book of Proverbs doesn't have good things to say about lazy people - or “sluggards.”

## THE “SLUGGARD”...

- Is responsible for his own terrible financial situation because he's lazy (10:4).
- Never keeps watch or manages his finances or resources (24:30).
- Talks about new ventures and opportunities but never follows through (14:23).
- Makes excuses for why he can never find or keep work (26:13).
- Wants management, leadership, and a successful career, but because of a lack of work ethic, will never achieve it (12:24).
- Leaves a job or project halfway done (12:27).
- Makes life is really, really, really hard and unpleasant for him and his family (15:19).
- Stay away from lazy, irresponsible, and entitled people - you will become just like them if you're around them long enough (vs. 6).
- Follow the example of those who live righteously, work hard, and are responsible (vs. 7-10).
- Stop enabling people who can work but aren't willing to work- that's not loving or helpful (vs. 11-12).

## DON'T GROW WEARY DOING GOOD (VS.13-18)

- Satan wants you discouraged, so that'll you'll give up and stop doing good.
- The Lord wants to give you peace - so that you have internal rest and a confidence that God's got you and everything's going to be ok.
- God wants you to know just how much grace has been given to you through Jesus to produce in your humility, security, and confidence.
- Are you spiritually weary? What are you doing to “come to Jesus” so He can give you rest? (Matt. 11:28)
- Are you physically weary? What are doing to recognize your physical limitations and steward the body God has given you?
- Are you overwhelmed (emotionally weary)? What are you doing to share your burdens with others?