

**II THESSALONIANS 3:3-5**  
**CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Thessalonians chapter 3 as we continue our study through Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica. And keep in mind that these were young believers who needed encouragement.

Thus, Paul gives them encouragement in the suffering they were facing for their faith. He wanted them to know that through this persecution they would grow in the Lord and the Lord is aware and He will deal with those who are coming against them. This persecution will end one day! And we saw that in II Thessalonians chapter 1.

Then he brings some correction to them in regard to doctrine. They came to the conclusion that they were in the Day of the Lord and they had missed the Rapture of the church. Thus, Paul gives to them enlightenment about the Day of the Lord! He tells them that they did not miss anything because this day will not happen until the church is first raptured and it is then that the man of sin will be revealed, the Antichrist and the Day of the Lord will begin! And we saw that in II Thessalonians chapter 2.

And now we come to where the rubber meets the road, you might say. As Paul begins to conclude his letter to them, here in II Thessalonians chapter 3, he tells them how to live out their faith. In other words, establishment of Christian living or living out your Christian faith!

How important that is to our witness. Let me show you what I mean. We are told that, Gutav Dore, the famous artist, once lost his passport while traveling in Europe. When he came to the boundary post between two countries and was asked for his passport, he fumbled about and finally announced, “I have lost it, but it is all right. I’m Dore, the artist. Please let me go in.”

“Oh, no,” said the officer. “We have plenty of people representing themselves as this or that great person! Here is a pencil and paper. Now, if you are Dore the artist, prove it by drawing me a picture.”

He took the pencil and drew some pictures of a scene in the immediate area.

“Now I am perfectly sure you are Dore. No one else could draw like that!” said the officer as he allowed Dore to enter the country.

So it is with us. People follow what we do on the stage of life. They look to see if our conduct squares with our profession. Are we drawing the picture of Christ, as it were, or of a different person? What the world wants to see is reality in our actions.

It has been said that God has great and wonderful things to display if He finds suitable showcases. Are you a good showcase for Jesus Christ?

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

And last week we looked at prayer and how important that is for, not only our own lives but also for the body of Christ. And we looked at three main points. We saw how prayer is needed for the spread of the Gospel. We saw how prayer is needed for the success of the Gospel. And we finished up by looking at how prayer is needed for the safeguarding of the Gospel.

This morning, as we continue here in II Thessalonians chapter 3, looking at the establishment of Christian living, we will be focusing on our ***CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD!***

And there are three main points that Paul will bring out in these verses. First of all, we see that ***THE LORD IS FAITHFUL*** here in II Thessalonians 3:3. Then we see that Paul had ***CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD*** in II Thessalonians 3:4. And finally, we see ***THE LORD'S DIRECTION*** here in II Thessalonians 3:5.

So, with that as our background, let's begin reading in II Thessalonians chapter 3, beginning in verse 3 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

### **II THESSALONIANS 3**

#### **VERSE 3**

Now some may wonder how we can have confidence in the Lord when this has happened to me or that has happened to me! And that is a great question. The thing we need to remember is that the Lord never promised that this life was going to be easy. What He did promise is that He would be with us through all that we go through. That He would give us the strength, the peace to endure those difficult times!

And Paul tells us that we can have this confidence because "**the Lord is faithful.**" The faithfulness of God and yet, how come we don't believe in His faithfulness all the time? Because we let things get in the way and we look at the situation instead of what God's Word has to say. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

A pastor who visited an old man suffering from painful rheumatism found him with his Bible open in front of him. The minister noticed that the word “proved” was written repeatedly in the margin. He turned over a few pages and found, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” “Proved.” And so it went on through the Book. Next to John 1:12, [“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”] he had written “Proved.”

He had received Christ by believing and had indeed become a child of God. He had proved that promise of God’s Word. Millions of other born-again believers could write “proved” next to this verse. There isn’t a single one who has put this promise of God to the test and been disappointed.

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

And yet, when things happen in our lives we begin to doubt the faithfulness of God. But the Scriptures are very clear, we can trust in His promises to us because God is faithful. Let me show you a few Scriptures and you will see what I mean.

First of all, in Numbers 23:19 we are told, **“God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”**

In other words, we can trust God and what He says to us because He will not lie, He will not go back on His Word! God is faithful!

And again, as we are going through difficult times we may lose sight of that truth, but it does not change the reality of it. Paul said in Romans 3:3, **“For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?”**

Our unbelief will not change the faithfulness of God. He is faithful no matter what we think. And specifically, here in Romans, Paul is speaking of the Jew.

In other words, if God's Word has been entrusted to the Jew, with all the promises made to them, then if some Jews don't believe, will that cause God to break His Word, to be unfaithful to them?

Paul answers this question about the unbelieving Jew making God unfaithful to His Word by saying, "**Certainly Not!**" or "Perish the thought!" in verse 4.

And just in case it does not come across strong enough in English, in the Greek it is in the strongest negative Greek expression they had. In other words, it is impossible for God to be unfaithful, to go back on His Word.

If He did He would not only be unfaithful, but His name would be meaningless, you couldn't trust Him! It is as David said in Psalm 138:2, "**I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.**"

Folks, God's promises to Israel are not all based upon their faithfulness. Some were, but the unilateral covenant that God made with Abraham was based solely upon God's faithfulness.

Think about it. Even in their rebellion against God He sent them the Redeemer, Jesus. In fact, all His promises that He has made to the Jew will come to pass in spite of their unbelief today!

Paul tells us in Romans 11:25-27, **“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’”**

God is faithful and what He has promised He will bring it to pass, for the Jew and for us; you can take that to the bank!

And folks, it doesn't matter what man may say about God. If you don't believe in God it doesn't mean that there is no God!

Now you may not agree with that but look at it this way. If I tell you that 2 plus 2 is 4, and you tell me that you don't believe that, it is not your reality or whatever, does that mean 2 plus 2 is not 4? “Certainly Not!” as Paul would say!

It only proves that you are a fool and that is what the Scriptures tell us, **“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good.”** Psalm 14:1.

Thus, it doesn't matter what you say you believe or don't believe, God is not a liar!

We are told in Isaiah 25:1, **“O Lord, You are my God. I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, For You have done wonderful things; Your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.”**

As we read this we can see that it is God who is the master of our life, there is that personal relationship. Because of that we should be praising God. We know Him and thus we should praise Him!

And make no mistake about it, if we truly look at our life, we can see the wonderful things that God has done in our life in spite of the difficulties we have faced. You see, we do know that God is faithful and what He has promised will come to pass. We have learned to trust God's Word because it is truth!

And in Lamentations 3:22-24 we are told, **“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘Therefore I hope in Him!’”**

As I have said so many times before, perspective is everything. Now you may not believe that but let me show you what I mean. Imagine it is January, close enough, in the heart of winter and the temperature is 40 degrees above zero! We would think that is great, some may even wear a lighter jacket with those temperatures.

But now it is July and the temperature is 40 degrees above zero! Guess what? We would be complaining how cold it is; we would probably put on winter jackets. Hey, I remember one Fourth of July fireworks show down by the lake where we had on winter jackets in July!

How can that be when it is the same temperature? It is all about perspective. You see, in January that is a great temperature but not in July.

The same is true in our spiritual lives. As we look at the world it is cold, heartless, it is bad, and we complain about it. But all of a sudden, your perspective changes as now you are placing the Lord right in the middle of all that, you are looking to Him. Now there is peace, there is joy, there is hope and-so-on.

Why the difference? It is not because the situation changed but your perspective of the situation changed, now you are looking to the Lord. Same circumstances or same temperature you might say but now you are resting in the Lord and that does change everything.

Notice again what Jeremiah says in verse 21, “**This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope.**” What did he recall to his mind? The truths of God found in the Word of God! You see, God’s Word is unchanging and what He has promised will come to pass. On the other hand, everything else is changing, all the various circumstances of life!

God is always encouraging us, giving us hope, giving us His peace in a world of turmoil and there is great comfort in that. May we learn to look to Him and lean upon Him more and more in our Christian lives! ***GREAT IS HIS FAITHFULNESS!***

Now let’s look at this verse once again. Paul says, “**But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.**” II Thessalonians 3:3.

The faithfulness that Paul is speaking of here in regard to what the Lord is doing in our lives is interesting to me. The word “**establish**” speaks of strengthening and I see this as God is working in us, strengthening the inner man.

Today we don’t deal with this issue of strengthening the inner man because it is hard, it takes time and we just don’t like it. What we like to do is find some book, some seminar, some trick to help us in our walk with the Lord!

There is no book called “Bible Verses for Dummies.” There is no shortcuts but this is a surrender to the Lord, allowing the Lord to work in your life, conforming you into His image and it takes time. We call it the sanctification process and like it or not, it takes a lifetime to get through this!

Listen to what Paul said in Ephesians 3:14-21, **“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”**

Paul’s prayer for the church in Ephesus is that they would be strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit of God. Paul goes right to the heart of things. He does not pray for their health, wealth, prosperity but that the inner man may be built up.

And yet, what do we focus on today? The building up or the beautification of the outer man, what we look like outwardly but the inward man is unchanged. And the problem is that what is on the inside will eventually flow outwardly, it will be manifested in what we do and say.

Think about it like this. We can put on this façade of Christianity, the makeup, all the dressings and yet, when someone says something we don’t like, they do something we don’t like, we fly off the handle, we can’t handle it and we say things or do things that are contrary to the Christian life.

What happened? Like I have said, we look good until things happen and then what is truly in our hearts is manifested in our actions. And there is a war going on inside of us, the flesh is warring against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh and whatever you are feeding will be manifested in your life.

Thus, you build up the inner man by being in the Word of God. You build up the inner man by being in prayer. You build up the inner man by surrendering your will to the Spirit's will in your life.

And listen to what Paul says regarding the new man in Christ and the old man, the flesh in Ephesians 4:23-32, **“and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another. ‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”**

Do you see the difference between the old man and the new man that is built in the things of God? I hope so. I have seen people who have gone into legalism and they are so hard on everyone but themselves.

And it is interesting, you see them in their so-called holy behavior and then someone does something to them or says something to them and you have all kinds of filthy language spoken, ungodly behavior, and you confront them on it and they feel that this person deserved it!

I am sorry, they may deserve it, but it does not give you the right to behave that way. That is the flesh and it is not of God. You look at the outward actions of the new man in Christ and you can see that this is not something that is manufactured but it is something that is born out of a relationship with God!

So, Paul is telling these Thessalonians that God is faithful and He will strengthen you in the inner man so that what He is doing on the inside will be manifested outwardly.

But why is this so important? Because of “**the evil one.**” He is going to try and trip you up, get you to do things that will hurt your witness, that will dishonor God!

All you have to do is go back to the Garden of Eden and you can see what Satan did to Eve, he got her to doubt God’s Word, and in the end, she bought into the lie and Adam sinned!

Look at Job and all he went through. Why? Because Satan wanted to trip him up. When Satan came before the Lord and the Lord put on display His servant Job, Satan basically said to God, “Of course Job loves you, look at how You are blessing him. But, if you touch his things, his possessions, his family, he will curse you!”

And the Lord allowed this to happen in Job’s life where he lost servants, his livestock, and even his sons and daughters, he lost it all! And through it all, Job blessed the LORD!

But Satan was not done. He basically said, “Okay, he won that one. But if you touch his health, then he will surly curse you!”

And God allowed that. And we are told, “**In all this Job did not sin with his lips.**” Job 2:9.

You see, Satan was tempting Job to sin and God was testing the faith of Job!

That is what is going on today and I can tell you this. That if you do not build up the inner man, you are giving room for the Devil to destroy your faith by tempting you to sin!

Surrender to the Spirit of God. Don't give into the flesh. Feed the Spirit and you will do well. God is building up the inner man so that you can stand against the evil one in Him!

And not only do we see this inward working that God is doing but we see outwardly what He is doing also. He will "**guard you from the evil one.**" II Thessalonians 3:3.

Now you may read that and think, "Hey, wait a minute pastor Joe. I see the evil one doing all kinds of things to Christians today, even putting them to death. So how is God guarding us from the evil one? Does this mean that God is not faithful in protecting us?"

Let me put this in perspective for you. "This does not mean we will not suffer difficulties, hardships, or even martyrdom (as was obvious from their own experiences). But it does mean that nothing can overcome those who belong to Christ. God is in control, and he keeps a protective guard around the believer. When Christians experience harm or even death because of righteousness, it is not evil which triumphs, but the plan of God which succeeds." (Source unknown)

Some of you may think that is a cop-out. It is not. When Jesus Christ hung on the Cross of Calvary and gave up His Spirit, did Satan win? Of course not, he lost!

When a Christian is put to death for his faith, does Satan win? Of course not. God has a plan, He has a purpose and I don't always understand it, but He does see the big picture and I rest in that, in His faithfulness to watch over me and protect me!

Paul, in II Timothy 4:16-18 put it like this, **“At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!”**

Yes, it was hard to be alone and yet, Paul realized he was never really alone, the Lord was with him.

That is a great perspective to have. He saw how the Lord delivered him from dangerous situations before and even in death the Lord would deliver him.

You see, with that perspective, you can't lose! And as Paul is in heaven, it is the Lord who receives the glory for it is Jesus who enabled Paul to be received up into heaven by His sacrificial work on the cross of Calvary, paying in full his debt (Paul's) and ours, casting all our sins as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more! A proper perspective to have!

Make no mistake about it, the Lord is faithful, and He will build us up in the inner man as we surrender to Him and He will protect us outwardly from the attacks of the evil one.

I think we would be shocked if we knew all the times that God has delivered us. What we focus on is the difficulties that come our way. And that tends to paralyze us in our walk.

Instead, as you go through those times, ask the Lord what He is showing you through them.

I have been through them, you have been through them and we will go through more, but God is always working in us so that He can work through us!

And remember what Jesus said to Peter in Matthew 16:18, “**And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.**”

Jesus’ point is that the church is built upon Jesus Christ, that He is God and not upon Peter. Also, Satan will not overcome the Lord’s church; he will not have victory over it even though Satan does persecute it.

You see, the Lord uses that to strengthen His people, it is where we grow, in the valley of the shadow of death as our Lord leads us through it! Thus, may we always remember that ***THE LORD IS FAITHFUL!***

#### VERSE 4

Not only is ***THE LORD FAITHFUL***, but we see here that he has ***CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD!***

Paul is saying that the guarding or protection of God from the devil and our effectiveness in ministry is connected to our obedience to what He has commanded through Paul and the other apostles.

Paul taught them the Word of God and then trusted in the work of the Holy Spirit to sustain them in their walk, that they would grow, mature in the faith.

Now some Christians stand there waiting for God to grow them, but that is not what the Scriptures teach. Yes, God works in us but then we must work out what He is doing in our lives, we must take those steps. It truly is living out what we say we believe!

And we did talk about this already, that God is working in us so that He can work through us and we see this spoken of in Philipppians.

Paul, in Philippians 2:12-13 put it this way, **“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”**

Now, as some read this they come to the conclusion, “Yes, Jesus saves us but then you must work to keep, to maintain your salvation and if you don’t, you will lose it!”

First of all, that is not what the Scriptures teach.

Paul, in Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”**

So that is not right, that you have to work to maintain your salvation because the work was completed by Jesus on the cross of Calvary for us and we are to receive that free gift by faith.

We are saved by Grace through Faith and not by the Law through works!

Paul tells us that we are to **“work out”** not “work to get in” our salvation. His point is simple, as I have said. Since God has worked in you, now let that flow out into your actions, the things you are doing, bear fruit in your life showing you are abiding in Him!

James put it this way in James 2:14-18, **“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”**

It is as Calvin said, “Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is never alone!”

Let what God is doing in you impact your life in such a way that it is manifested in your actions as you honor, respect the Lord, and as you do it brings God pleasure!

Thus, Paul was confident in the Lord regarding these believers in Thessalonica. He was confident that they would follow through and be obedient to God’s Word, **“that you do and will do the things we command you.”**

And this is something that any good pastor would desire, and it is what Paul desired. That these new believers would grow in the faith, not remain spiritual baby’s all their lives and not only to grow, but keep growing in the faith as He directs their hearts, which is then manifested outwardly in love and patience, the Fruit of the Spirit!

That is my desire for all of you, to continue to grow in the faith!

And we do see that in the lives of these believers. Let me show you what I mean.

In I Thessalonians chapter 1 we are told, **“remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father . . . And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.”** I Thessalonians 1:3, 6-8.

Then, in I Thessalonians 3:12-13 we are told, **“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.”**

And in I Thessalonians 4:1-2 we are told, **“Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.”**

You see, the things that Paul taught them they applied to their lives. They were obedient and they walked accordingly. This was not just information but transformation as they surrendered their lives to the Holy Spirit and what God was doing in them was manifested outwardly, in their words and deeds!

And, as I have said before, they were going through tough times. The persecution they faced was intense and yet, they were obedient to the Lord and a witness to the loss of their faith in Christ!

As I teach you the Word of God, as we go through the Scriptures verse by verse, over the last 23 years we have gone through the Bible almost two times, and I am confident that the Lord will transform your lives as you surrender to Him and His Word!

Remember what Isaiah 55:11 says, **“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.”**

If I did not believe that, if I did not have confidence in the Lord and His Word, I would be done. I would not waste my time teaching the Word of God. But as Paul said in Hebrews 4:12, **“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”**

Make no mistake about it, we are living in a day when Biblical illiteracy is rampant. People truly don't know what they believe, what the Scriptures teach on subjects, and that is tragic and dangerous!

And thus, they walk according to the desires of their own heart instead of what God desires. And we see that with all the immorality that has come into the church.

What is the solution? Paul tells us it is the Word of God being taught because the Word of God is living, it is not dead, it is not boring.

God's Word is powerful, it is energizing, it will accomplish in our lives what God wants it to.

The Word of God is like a surgical instrument, like a scalpel that can pierce or penetrate right through to the inner man, our soul and spirit.

As it does it pierces through to the joints or how we walk, it will have an impact on our actions.

Also, it goes right down to the marrow or the place that the red blood cells are produced, our very lives and thus it will be reflected in how we manifest things outwardly because what takes place on the inside will overflow to the outside.

Now think about this. Who can know what is in our heart? Only God can as Jeremiah 17:9-10 tells us, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.”**

Why are heart issues not dealt with today? Because the Word of God is not being applied to people's lives and we can put on a good show outwardly but inwardly, what God sees is a mess.

We need to give it to Him, we need to be in the Word of God allowing the Spirit of God to show us what is in our heart so we can get rid of it!

Make no mistake about it, we need to have ***CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD*** and what he is doing in our lives. He will work in us so that He then can work through us for His glory!

#### VERSE 5

So, we have seen that ***THE LORD IS FAITHFUL!*** We have seen that Paul had ***CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD!*** And lastly, here in verse 5 we see ***THE LORD'S DIRECTION!***

I like this because if any of you know me, you know that I can get lost very easily. My sense of direction is not very good. And God is gracious, He has given me a wife who is very good with directions!

Many of you have heard this before but several years ago Julie and I were heading to Chicago to see my mom. We stopped to get something to eat along the way, just past Milwaukee.

Thus, when it was time to get back on the Interstate, I did! As I turned Julie said, "Joe, I think you are going in the wrong direction" as we passed a sign that said Milwaukee was getting closer! Remember, we already passed Milwaukee!

But that didn't matter to me, I knew I was going in the right direction. But my wife, she is very patient with me, said, "Joe, we already passed Milwaukee and now it is coming up again. You are going in the wrong direction!"

Okay, now I am getting a little mad and I told her that we are fine, we are going in the right direction. And then she asked the question, "How do you know we are going in the right direction?"

Well, sometimes you should just think before you talk, but it didn't stop me from answering her question. I told her, "Because those cars on the other side of the Interstate are going north and that means we have to be going south!"

It sounded so good, even though it was totally wrong. You see, we were headed north, back home, which meant they were not going north but south! Humbled! My navigational abilities, not good!

Hey, I'm not alone in this. Listen to this and I think I am just a little better. We are told,

A brochure put out several years ago by the Durham, N.C., County Public Library explained the use of the card catalogue, acknowledging that this can be mystifying at times. The brochure told of one patron who, upon reading "See Main Entry" on a catalogue card, went out to the front steps of the library.

- Durham, N.C. Herald

Makes me feel a little better. Now, what I love here is Paul is praying for the Lord to ***DIRECT*** them! And this word, "**direct**" means to make straight; guide."

That is exactly what we need because there are so many false teachers and false doctrines that are getting us to go down other paths. We need to look to the Lord, listen to Him because He will direct us in the ways we need to go!

In Psalm 119:133 we are told, "**Direct my steps by Your word, And let no iniquity have dominion over me.**"

God's Word directs us in how we are to walk, what we are to do, how we are to live. And it keeps us from sin.

Also, we are told in Proverbs 3:5-6, **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.”**

I think it is important for us to understand that our understanding of things can be wrong and thus, we need to trust in what the Lord is showing us. And as we do, as we rest in Him, as we listen to His direction, **“He shall direct your paths.”**

I am so thankful for that. He will show me where to go, what to do, what to say. He will direct me all the days of my life if I am willing to seek Him and obey His Word to me!

Now, here in II Thessalonians 3:5 Paul speaks of two things that he is praying for these believers. He is praying that the Lord would direct them **“into the love of God”** and also, **“into the patience of Christ.”**

Let’s look at this first point, that God would direct them **“into the love of God.”**

Keep in mind that the persecution they were facing was intense. And thus, it is easy to get angry at God, to distance ourselves from Him because of the things that are happening to us. Not only that, but we can also become cold to those around us, and distance ourselves from them.

Now, the big question is, what point is Paul making here? Is he speaking of us growing in the love of God or that the love of God towards others would grow?

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

The phrase of God in the Greek can be either an objective or subjective genitive: into God’s love for the believer, or the believer’s love for God.

The Greek grammar provided Paul with a certain ambiguity of expression so that he could convey a complete, well-rounded sense of truth to the Thessalonians. In this context, therefore, the phrase is probably both objective and subjective.

J. B. Lightfoot noted, “The Apostles availed themselves . . . of the vagueness or rather comprehensiveness of language, to express a great spiritual truth” (cited in Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989], 249).

Paul desired that his audience go down the pathway deeper and deeper into God’s love for them, which in turn would cause them to love Him more and more.

- John Macarthur, II Thessalonians 3:5

And I agree with that. I think both do apply here. F. F. Bruce put it like this, “In any case, Christian love is . . . the effect of the outpouring of God’s love into his people’s hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5). The more they appreciate God’s love, the more they will reflect it in their love to him and to others.” (F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, p. 202)

It is as Paul said in Romans 5:5, **“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”**

I believe it all starts here with the love of God being poured out in our hearts. But that love is not stationary, it grows, at least it should. You see, the more you read the Word of God, the more you see what God has done for you, the more you see how you are compared to a holy and righteous God, the more you love Him!

In fact, we love Him because He first loved us and He demonstrated that love for us by going to the cross of Calvary and dying for our sins!

Now that you have that love of God, you need to extend that love to others. And I am not talking about loving those who like you or are kind to you or treat you well. That is easy. But also those who hate you, those who spitefully use you, love them!

They don't deserve it you might be thinking! That is true, but go back to the love that God has poured out into your life and you did not deserve it! Now go and love others like that!

I can't do that! That is true, you can't but as you surrender your will to the will of God, submit to the Holy Spirit, you can. It is not natural to love those who hate you, it is supernatural and thus, we need God to help us to love like this!

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

I vividly remember an incident that took place at our Greek Keswick in Macedonia one year. The Lord had just opened the door for a special ministry among the Turks. After I announced it, a devout Christian woman came up to me, placed some Greek currency in my hand, and said, "I want this used to win Turks to Christ. They killed my brother, but I want to be the first to contribute to their cause."

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

How could she do something like that when these people killed her brother? Because of the love of God that was poured into her life was now being manifested in her life, in her actions. She wanted these people to come to Christ!

May we have that kind of love for people. But for many, they refuse and let things get in the way of God's love flowing from their lives and touching the lives of others. May that not be. May God's love not only grow in us but through us and be a witness to others as we love them!

The second point here is that God would direct them "**into the patience of Christ.**"

Again, there is a picture that Paul is painting here in regard to patience. Paul links it to Christ. What is his point?

I think what Paul is saying is that we need to look at Christ, His patience towards us in regard to our sin, problems, and struggles and to understand better His own endurance in trials. We can learn by looking at what He did and then walking accordingly!

Listen to how Paul put it in Hebrews 12:1-4, **“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”**

Paul is speaking to these Jewish believers who were struggling with their faith. And now the Holy Spirit is speaking to us and He is saying, “Look at the example of faith these Old Testament saints had, all they endured and then run accordingly. It can be done – they did it and they had less light to run by than you do and yet they were victorious. Thus, so can you!”

Yes, we can be encouraged by other believers and how they are living out their faith. And Paul warns us of what can hinder us in our walk with the Lord and he mentions two things.

First of all, he speaks of **“weight”** or OGGKOS, (ong’-kos) in the Greek. This is not bad or evil necessarily but they speak of things that get into our life and weigh us down so we can’t finish the race that God has set before us. You know how it is, the more weight we put on in our physical lives, the harder it is to do the things we did when we didn’t have all that weight on.

Imagine a marathon runner who is pulling a refrigerator behind him in the race. He needs food, so he thought he would bring some along. Also, it is a long race so he can catch a movie, so he brings his portable DVD player with him. To catch up with the news he brings along a newspaper and a favorite book to read along the way.

None of these things are bad, they are not wrong, but they will hinder him from finishing the race, they will weigh him down.

We as Christians cannot win or run well if we are carrying excess weight around. For us it can be anything that distracts us from Christ, that keeps us from doing what He has called us to do.

For these Jewish believers it was legalism, the old religious ways, going back to the Law that kept them from going forward! What is holding you down, what is holding you back?

Secondly, Paul speaks of “**sin**” or HAMARTIA, (ham-ar-tee’-ah) in the Greek and it speaks of missing the mark, of coming up short, an offence before God.

Any sin will hinder our progress and specifically here, it is “**the sin**” which I believe is unbelief. You see, unbelief will hinder us in this race of faith; it will give the enemy room to trip us up. But make no mistake about it, all sin will be a hindrance to you!

What can we do about it? Paul tells us that we are to “**lay aside**” or APOTITHEMI, (ap-ot-eeth’-mee) in the Greek and it speaks of casting off, to put away. In other words, we have choices to make in this life and the choices we make will either hinder us or propel us forward. They will either keep us apart from where Christ wants us to be or move us closer to the finish line, where He is standing!

You see, these things are trying to “**ensnare us**” or entangle us. They are like an ambush to our faith, but they don’t have to be!

We can run the race with endurance, with joy, with patience, with consistency. The word for “**endurance**” translates the ancient Greek word HUPOMONE, (hoop-om-on-ay’) “which does not mean the patience which sits down and accepts things but the patience which masters them . . . It is a determination, unhurrying and yet undelaying, which goes steadily on and refuses to be deflected.” (Barclay.)

You see, the “**race**” we are in, AGONA in the Greek, speaks of a conflict or struggle. Doesn’t that sum up our life? It does mine. It is a battle to run that race!

And the way we can endure is by keeping our eyes focused. But what should we focus on. Again, here in Hebrews 12:2 we are told that we are to keep our eyes upon Jesus and that is what Paul is saying here in II Thessalonians 3:5.

You see, in any race, if you are not focused, if you become distracted, if you take your eyes off the goal, you will trip, you will stumble, you will lose the race.

Paul tells us here to keep our eyes upon Jesus, who is the “**author**” or ARCHEGOS, (ar-khay-gos’) in the Greek and it speaks of the chief leader.

In other words, Jesus pioneered the path of faith that we as Christians are to follow after!

And Jesus is not only the author of our faith, but He is the “**finisher**” of our faith, TELEOIOTES, (tel-i-o-tace’) in the Greek, which speaks of completing the work.

Jesus will carry our faith through to completion or as Paul said in Philippians 1:6, “**being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.**”

And really, the whole book of Hebrews, written to these Jewish believers who were struggling with their faith, was to *CONSIDER JESUS*, to look at His example to be an encouragement in their walk, what they were going through!

Yes, they faced social and economic persecution, and even some physical persecution, but not to bloodshed, at least not yet!

But Jesus has died for us, shed His blood for us and as He was persecuted, having done nothing wrong, He was righteous, we as His servants will also face tough times as Paul said in Romans 8:17, “**and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.**”

Folks, Jesus doesn't ask more of us than we are capable of handling with Him, more than what He experienced in the Incarnation! He knows what we are going through and He will strengthen us through those times if we would only keep our eyes fixed upon Him. Don't grow weary, don't become discouraged, look to Jesus!

Yes, we should have confidence in the Lord because He is more than able to help us with all we are going through. And the lessons we have seen here this morning are important for us to learn and apply to our lives.

First of all, we saw that ***THE LORD IS FAITHFUL*** here in II Thessalonians 3:3.

Then we saw that Paul had ***CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD*** in II Thessalonians 3:4.

And finally, we saw ***THE LORD'S DIRECTION*** here in II Thessalonians 3:5.

As I have said, Paul desired that these new believers would grow in the faith, not remain spiritual baby's all their lives and not only to grow, but keep growing in the faith as He directs their hearts, which is then manifested outwardly in love and patience, the Fruit of the Spirit! That is my desire for all of you, to continue to grow in the faith and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!