

II THESSALONIANS 3

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II Thessalonians chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God, and we finish up Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica.

In our study of this letter we have broken it down into three main points, which, of course, corresponds to the three chapters of this letter.

First of all, Paul wrote to the Thessalonian believers to give them *Encouragement in Suffering*, and we saw that in II Thessalonians chapter 1.

These new believers were facing persecution for their faith in Jesus and Paul wants to encourage them not to give up even in the midst of this persecution.

Paul said this of these believers in Thessalonica to encourage them in II Thessalonians 1:3-10, **"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and**

to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.”

Paul encourages them by telling them he is boasting about them, about their faith in the Lord. He wants them to hang in there because this persecution is what happens to believers and in the end, God will deal with those who are doing the persecution, they will not get away with this.

Rest in the Lord and thus, we see the *Encouragement in Suffering!*

Secondly, Paul wrote to them to give them *Enlightenment About the Day of the Lord*, and we saw that in II Thessalonians chapter 2.

Paul taught them eschatology or last days, end times doctrine.

But now they were confused because people were coming in and giving false prophecies - by the Spirit.

There were false teachers giving out false doctrine – by word.

And there was a false letter, supposedly from Paul saying they were in the Day of the Lord and they either missed the Rapture or there was no such thing as the Rapture.

Thus, Paul clears up that mess and shows them that the Day of the Lord had not started, the Rapture must come first, and then the unveiling of the Antichrist, that is the start of the Day of the Lord.

The persecution they were facing in Thessalonica was from Satan, during the Tribulation Period it is the wrath of God that is being poured out upon a Christ rejecting world.

Again, listen to what Paul says about this issue that had them confused, **“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first [the departure or the Rapture of the church], and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?”** II Thessalonians 2:1-5.

And how important that is, they knew the truth, Paul taught them the truth, and these false teachers with their false doctrine had come in and confused them and that is exactly what false teachers and false doctrine does, it confuses people!

Paul concludes II Thessalonians chapter 2 by saying, **“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”**

And thus, we see here that Paul has given them this *Enlightenment About the Day of the Lord!*

Tonight, in II Thessalonians chapter 3 Paul is going to write to them regarding the *Establishment of Christian Living*.

Paul is calling for them to walk accordingly, to walk in the light of God by the grace of God given to them.

He calls for them to withdraw from those who are disorderly or not following the doctrine that God has established in His Word.

He calls for those who were lazy, just sitting back and waiting for the Lord to return I guess, and thus, they were busybodies, not doing anything, not working.

Thus, this is a practical section where the rubber meets the road you might say. The application of sound doctrine to our lives or walking worthy of the high calling by which we have been called knowing that the Lord can return at any moment for His Bride, the Church!

With that said, let's begin reading in II Thessalonians chapter 3, starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word.

II THESSALONIANS 3

VERSES 1-2

When you look at what Paul is praying for it is vastly different from what we hear today many times.

We hear prayers for more money, bigger homes, more this and more that.

And even we hear prayers for a bigger church, more people and so on.

But notice Paul's prayer here. Paul's prayer was not to increase the body of Christ but to build it up, to strengthen it.

Now there is nothing wrong in praying for the salvation of believers, building up the body of Christ, but that was not Paul's concern here, he wanted them to grow in the Lord!

And Paul knew that would be accomplished as the Word of God had the freedom "*to speed on*" or "*to make progress*" in a believer's life.

Now this is not wishful thinking. This is what God has promised to us in His Word. That as the Word of God is spoken, it would accomplish what the Lord sent it to do in believer's lives.

Remember what we are told in Isaiah 55:11, **“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”**

Do we believe that? I do, that is why I teach God's Word book by book, chapter by chapter and verse by verse. I know that God will accomplish in each heart for those that are here in the church, and those listening on the radio and the Internet exactly what He wants it to do in their lives. May we be open to receive it.

Warren Wiersbe gives us this insight on the lack of trust in the Word of God and instead, trying to draw people by all other kinds of means. He wrote,

Too much Christian work these days is accomplished by human plans and promotion, and not by the Word of God. We trust our programs and not the Word of God. The universe was created, and is sustained, by the Word of God (Heb. 11:3).

Surely His Word can accomplish His work in this world. But the preaching of the Word in the pulpit has too often been replaced by the entertainment of the world on the platform.

Dr. Donald Coggan has said of Christian pastors: “It is their task to feed the sheep - not to entertain the goats.”

- Warren Wiersbe

Exactly. And think about this, because I think many miss out on this point that Jesus made in what we call the Great Commission.

Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20, because many times I think we only get part of it.

We are told, **“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”**

Yes, we are to share our faith, bring people to Jesus, into the Kingdom of God, but it doesn't end there.

You do not bring a child into the world and then let them go at it themselves, but you must nurture them, care for them, provide food for them so they can mature and take care of themselves.

For Christians, new believers, we are to teach them the things of God, make them disciples of Jesus.

That was Paul's prayer for these believers, and he knew if their faith grew, as they matured, healthy sheep will naturally reproduce, and the church will grow.

Today we tend to put the cart in front of the horse and the church in America may be 3,000 miles wide but only an inch deep!

Also, Paul also prayed that the Word of God, the Good News of Jesus Christ would be **“glorified”** or honored.

Today, the Word of God is seen as a ***“guidebook”*** but not the Word of God from the lips of God.

Some feel it is nothing more than stories that have some kind of spiritual application and we have to determine what that is.

Others feel that these are just the words of man and not the Word of God!

Others say this book is just a bunch of myths.

Some even say it is boring, thus, it may be taught but only for a short period of time.

But listen to the response of the people to God's Word as Paul shared in Antioch in Pisidia.

In Acts 13:42-49 we are told, **“So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: “I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.”’ Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.”**

May we have that same love for God's Word and give God's Word glory in the sense that we obey it, not worship it!

I remember when I first got saved and heard the Word of God being taught verse by verse. I could not get enough because God was speaking to me, showing me about Himself and about me. And today, some thirty-five plus years later, I still love the Word of God because God speaks to me and continues to show me things I need to learn, I need to apply to my life!

Now, anytime God is working, Satan is working as well trying to stop the work.

Here we see that there were these wicked men who were fighting against the Gospel message, the Word of God and Paul prays against them, that God's Word would impact the people in Thessalonica and that they would not be swayed by these evil men with their lies.

That should be our prayer also, to be delivered from ungodly men who try to put out the light of God's Word or that the light of God's Word illuminated by the Spirit of God would transform the lives of these false teachers with their false doctrine.

Either way, remember, God's Word is never chained, no matter what the enemy might do, but don't let that stop you from praying that God's Word would go forth and that evil men would not stop the work we are doing!

One of the problems with those who have turned away from the Word of God is that as you show them through the Word that what they are believing is wrong, they refuse to accept it and they continue down that path away from God. I have seen that far too often today, and it is very dangerous.

These false teachers with their false doctrine sow discourse in the church and sometimes even division. Be careful, bring everything in the light of God's Word because deception is a big part of the last days scenario!

VERSES 3-5

Now we read what Paul is saying here, that God will “**guard you from the evil one**” and we look at our lives and we see all kinds of problems. How can Paul tell us that God is guarding our lives and yet, there is all this persecution against us. Many are facing the threat of death for their faith every day. So how does this play out?

What is up with that?

Listen to what one writer had to say,

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

Remember what Peter said in I Peter 5:8-11, “**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**”

How do we resist the Devil? In our faith in Christ. We rest in Him and even though persecution may come, difficulties may come, we can stand strong in the faith knowing that the Lord will see us through each and every one of these times!

Let me share this with you and show you how we are to forge ahead, keep our eyes on Jesus and remember that He is sufficient to see us through anything that comes our way, He is our commander and chief you might say.

We are told,

I once heard the story of an old Navajo Indian in Arizona who became a very wealthy man when oil was discovered on his land.

But the wealth did not change him. He went on living just as he had before while the money piled up in the bank.

Every now and then, however, the old man would visit the bank and say to the banker, “Crops all dried up; sheep all dead; cattle all stolen.”

The banker knew exactly what to do. He would take the old man into the vault, seat him at a table, and place several bags of silver dollars in front of him for him to count.

After a while the man would come out and say, “Crops fine; sheep all alive; cattle all back.”

Why the change?

He had simply reviewed his resources and reminded himself of what he had to fall back on.

This is what believers must do when the pressure comes. When we feel like complaining and murmuring, let us remember who we are in Him and what He has promised us for times of stress.

A young pastor called me recently. He was in despair. A crisis had erupted in his church and everything seemed to be falling apart. His ministry of preaching the truth in great power had come under the attack of the enemy, and he was ready to give up.

I steadied him by taking him back, step by step, over what God had made him to be, what his resources were, and what and Whom he could count on.

I reminded him of the Israelites at the edge of the Red Sea. God did not say to them, “Go out into the water and drown.” He told them, “I will see you through to the other side.”

That is what God is saying to us too: Stand firm!

- Ray Stedman, Hope in A chaotic World, First and Second Thessalonians, pp. 135-136

How important that is for us to remember, to stand strong in the Lord, don't let the enemy discourage you and cause you to drop out!

And as we can see here, Paul is encouraging these Thessalonian believers to fall back on the character of God, that He loves us, that He is in control, that He knows everything that is happening to us and He will see us through it, He will protect us.

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!

Let me give you an example of what I mean.

Listen to what is taking place in China, as persecution is intense upon these believers. This is from 2005 and things have deteriorated once again for believers in China.

We are told:

Open Doors International reports that some of the fastest-growing house churches in the world are located in China – They say an estimated 60 to 80 million are Christians in China, making it one of the most heavily populated Christian countries in the world.

They also say, unfortunately, it also makes Chinese believers one of the largest bodies of persecuted Christians in the world, especially those who worship in unregistered house churches (which includes an estimated 75 percent of all Christians in China).

Pastors are thrown into prison. The distribution of Bibles and Christian literature is restricted, especially in the countryside.

China is ranked No. 9 on Open Doors' World Watch List of countries where Christians are most severely persecuted. Since 1999, the U.S. State Department has designated China a "Country of Particular Concern" under International Religious Freedom Act, for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

- Focus, May 2005, Pasadena, CA., p. 3

Persecution doesn't extinguish the church, but in reality, it helps it to grow strong.

What do I mean by that?

I mean you don't have people who are not saved risking their lives for something they don't believe in. You only risk your life for something that you truly believe in!

We need to pray for our brothers and sisters in China and throughout the world that God would strengthen them in the faith and maybe we need to pray for a little persecution against us here in America so that our faith may grow.

We don't need Seeker Friendly churches, but churches where they preach the Word in truth.

We don't need a Purpose Driven Life, but a Spirit guided life!

And we see here that 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.

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.”**

As any good pastor would desire, 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 God 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!

VERSE 6

This is not an easy point that Paul is making here and let me clear things up so someone doesn't take this to the wrong conclusion.

First of all, churches should never withdraw from someone because he fails to conform to the traditions of man or man's teachings. The only standard to uphold is *apostolic* tradition and teaching, that was the early church. And for us, it is the Word of God, from Genesis through Revelation! We have the completed Word of God before us and we are not to add to it or take anything away from it.

Hiebert sums it up like this for us. He wrote, "The present tense of the verb *walks* denotes that it is a deliberate course of action. Their disorderly conduct is not an occasional lapse but a persistent practice."

And please understand that this is not just a suggestion by Paul, but a command!

Not only that, but this is not just an issue from Paul's heart, it was from the Lord that those believers who are walking disorderly, who are unruly, who are out of order, we are to avoid them or pull back from them.

Paul, back in I Thessalonians 5:14 said, "**Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly . . .**"

Some didn't listen, and according to Matthew chapter 18, in regard to church discipline, step one is that you confront the person. If they don't listen, then step two is to bring two or three witnesses with you. If they don't listen then, step three is to tell their sin before the church. And if they still don't listen, if they still refuse to repent, then they are to be cut off from fellowship, not for destruction but for restoration, that they would repent and get right with God.

Paul, in I Corinthians 5:11 said, **“But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner - not even to eat with such a person.”**

If you don't, you are condoning their sin and fighting against God's will, what God wants to do in that person's life. Wise words, but they are also difficult ones!

As we read on Paul is going to zero in on an area of disobedience that some in the church there in Thessalonica had gotten into.

VERSES 7-9

Now, before Paul gets into the specifics of what they were doing wrong, he uses his life as an example of how they should be living, what they should be doing.

Paul worked to support his ministry; he worked to be able to shine the Gospel message.

When Paul was with them in Thessalonica, they saw how he conducted himself, working to eat so that he would not be a burden to them.

Regarding Paul's example, David Guzik wrote, “Paul was an excellent example among the Thessalonians, in that he worked hard to support his own needs. This wasn't because apostles like Paul didn't have the right to request support. Instead, it was because he wanted to set a good example of hard work and prove false any accusation that he preached the Gospel for personal gain.”

Paul lays this example out in I Corinthians 9:3-14 where he says, **“My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.’ Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.”**

Paul could be supported, and at times he was, but that was not his focus and he would rather support himself and be a witness to others, not be a burden to them, then to receive support for the ministry!

Thus, if Paul worked to meet his own personal needs and to move the Gospel message forward, how could they justify their unruly behavior? Some did and Paul is going to address this issue in a very strong way, he doesn’t want them to continue in this attitude that dishonors God.

VERSES 10-12

Now, as some read this, they are offended by what Paul is saying. And maybe some should be offended by this so that they will change.

But let me also say this. Please understand what Paul is saying here. He is not speaking of those who can't work because of physical problems or those who can't find work and are trying.

He is speaking of those who won't work. They refuse to work. They are just plain lazy, and they are satisfied living off of others, living off the church!

For me, I just can't understand how a Christian can have this attitude. We are to work, support ourselves and our family.

And if there is some physical reason or you just can't find a job, yes, that is when help can be provided for you.

Also, one of the reasons maybe they were not working is that they thought they were in the Day of the Lord, that the return of Jesus was close, so what is the point working. Just kick back and wait and let others take care of me.

The thing is this. Others have to work to not only support themselves but you! And that is wrong if you are able to work!

Not only were some of these believers not working, but also their idleness gave them time to be busybodies, sticking their noses into other people's business.

What is the solution for these people?

Get to work!

You see, if you are busy working you won't have the time to stick your nose in other people's business.

And when people are busybodies, they tend to cause all kinds of trouble, all kinds of discord within the church, even divisions in the body of Christ.

Now let me deal with this topic of laziness.

The book of Proverbs has much to say regarding laziness. Let's look at a few verses to show you this is not a gift of the Spirit!

In Proverbs 20:4 we are told, **"The lazy man will not plow because of winter; He will beg during harvest and have nothing."**

In Proverbs 19:15 we are told, **"Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, And an idle person will suffer hunger."**

In Proverbs 6:6-11 we are told, **"Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler, Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep - So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, And your need like an armed man."**

I like this one, a great excuse not to work in Proverbs 22:13, **"The lazy man says, 'There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!'"**

And lastly, in Proverbs 26:13-15 we are told, **"The lazy man says, 'There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!' As a door turns on its hinges, So does the lazy man on his bed. The lazy man buries his hand in the bowl; It wearies him to bring it back to his mouth."**

Okay, one more. Paul tells us in I Timothy 5:8, **"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."**

This is what not to do! We are to provide for ourselves and our families as I have said, and if we don't, if we take advantage of the system, we are **“worse than an unbeliever.”**

Let me share a few Scriptures to show you what we are to do, that we serve the Lord and we are to do our best.

First of all, in Colossians 3:23-24 we are told, **“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”**

In Proverbs 14:23 we are told, **“In all labor there is profit, But idle chatter leads only to poverty.”** That should just make sense.

In Proverbs 12:11 we read, **“He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread, But he who follows frivolity is devoid of understanding.”** Again, that just makes sense, if you don't work you will not eat!

And in Galatians 6:9 Paul reminds us, **“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”**

Yes, work is not easy, but God is using you where you are at and there will be fruit that will be produced. Work hard for the Lord!

And here is another important point that we miss out on at times. You see, not only were their actions or non-actions a bad witness, but also it was affecting those believers who were working.

They worked hard and then saw their brothers in the Lord who could work, but didn't, living off the church, living off of them.

It discouraged them and some may have even thought of getting into that sluggard mentality, why not?

Some may have felt they should no longer support those in need if this was going to happen.

Folks, these people were not in need, they were in greed. We are to help those that are in need!

And as we read on, we will see that Paul is going to encourage those believers who were doing well, working hard, to continue on, don't be discouraged.

VERSE 13

What we see here is that Paul is reminding them, admonishing them not to grow weary, not to lose heart, continue working hard because God is fully aware of what you are doing.

Not only that, but by their efforts they were a witness to others.

It is sad to see this attitude with some Christians today and folks, it is nothing more than laziness on their part and they are a horrible witness to others and they can discourage their brothers in sisters in the Lord by their laziness, by feeding off of others when they can and should be working!

Spurgeon put it like this, "But well doing consists in taking down the shutters and selling your goods; tucking up your shirt sleeves and doing a good day's work; sweeping the carpets and dusting the chairs, if you happen to be a domestic servant. Well doing is attending to the duties that arise out of our relationships in life – attending carefully to them, and seeing that in nothing we are eye-servers and men-pleasers, but in everything are seeking to serve God."

Yes, there are times we are tired in the work, and that is just a reality in these bodies of flesh, they do get tired.

But may we never be tired of the work that God has called us to do, that is wrong.

VERSES 14-15

Because some refused to listen it just showed they were willfully being disobedient and thus, there were consequences for their actions. They were to be disfellowshipped, kicked out of the church.

That may seem harsh, that may seem unchristian like, but if you let them continue on in their sin you are helping them to live in sin, not to grow.

And, many times, their sin will be caught by others and it will affect the health of the church. Be careful!

Tragically, today when you confront someone in sin and they don't like it, which is most of the time, they just move down the road to another church. There is no accountability!

Back then, when you were out you were out, there was no place to run to!

Paul, in I Corinthians 5:1-6 shows us a problem that arose in the church in Corinth. We are told, **“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles - that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?”**

A Christian man was having sexual relations with his unsaved stepmother or his mother and the church was ignoring it. In fact, they were proud of the fact that they were allowing this man to remain in the church, they were tolerant!

Doesn't that sound like the church today! Many will boast in the fact that they accept homosexuality, lesbianism, transgenderism, all kinds of perverted sexual sin into the church.

They boast in the fact that they are supportive of abortion. And the list goes on.

Paul does not praise them for their tolerance, but Paul rebukes them and tells them that this man must be removed from the church, removed from the protection of the church so Satan can buffet his flesh!

Again, the idea here is not for destruction, but for brokenness that leads to repentance and restoration.

And that is what we see as we move into II Corinthians 2:5-8 as this man repented and what Paul says the church needs to do now. We are told, **“But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent - not to be too severe. This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.”**

You see, once the person repents, they are to be accepted back in, received in love with the forgiveness of God.

Thus, church discipline is needed in the church today, not for destruction but for restoration!

Of this Warren Wiersbe said, “Church discipline is not a group of ‘pious policemen’ out to catch a criminal. Rather, it is a group of broken-hearted brothers and sisters seeking to restore an erring member of the family.”

How true that is, or that is how it should be!

Calvin also picked up on this and wrote, “The intention of excommunication is not to drive men from the Lord’s flock, but rather to bring them back again when they have wandered and gone astray . . . Excommunication is to be distinguished from anathema.”

We need to understand that, restoration not destruction!

Now when we remove someone from the church because of their sin and their refusal to repent and get right with God it doesn’t make them our enemy, they are our brothers and sisters in the Lord and our removal from fellowship with them is done out of love for them, to see them get right.

Of this Morgan tells us, “If discipline is largely lacking in the Church of today, so also is the grace of forgiving and comforting those who, having done wrong, are truly repentant. How often, alas! souls have been indeed swallowed up with overmuch sorrow because of the harshness and suspicion of Christian people toward them in view of some wrong which they have done . . . love never slights holiness; but holiness never slays love.”

May we remember that!

Now, as Paul closes this letter, he leaves with this benediction or blessing for them.

VERSE 16

The church in Thessalonica was experiencing lots of persecution, it was difficult for them to live out their faith because of it.

And how does Paul close this letter?

He closes this letter by saying that he is praying for them, that the Lord of peace will fill their lives with His peace.

Folks, true peace is only found in the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. The world does not have this kind of peace for us. But we can obtain this peace that surpasses all understanding from our Lord Himself!

Spurgeon put it like this, “I want to call particular attention to the apostle’s words in this place. He does not say ‘May the Lord of peace send his angel to give you peace.’ It were a great mercy if he did, and we might be as glad as Jacob was at Mahanaim, when the angels of God met him. He does not even say, ‘May the Lord of peace send his minister to give you peace.’ If he did we might be as happy as Abraham when Melchizedec refreshed him with bread and wine. He does not even say, ‘May the Lord of peace at the communion table, or in reading the word, or in prayer, or in some other sacred exercise give you peace.’ In all these we might well be as refreshed . . . but he says ‘the Lord of peace himself give you peace,’ as if he alone in his own person could give peace, and as if his presence were the sole means of such a divine peace as he desires.”

Remember what Jesus said in John 16:33, **“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

Our peace is found in Jesus, not in this world, not in anything or anyone else. It is found in Jesus and once we make peace with God through Jesus, we can receive His peace into our lives.

We are also told in Isaiah 26:3 about what we are to do. We are told, **“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.”**

We need to stay focused upon the Lord. You see, *“Peace is not cessation from persecution, but is the calm of heart that comes from faith in God and that is independent of circumstances.”*

Where or from whom are you seeking peace from?

May it be the Lord!

VERSE 17

Paul shows that this letter was truly from him as he wrote the final words of this epistle or letter with his own hands. The rest of the letter was dictated by Paul and written down by another person for Paul.

Keep in mind that there was a false letter being circulated that was supposedly from Paul, it wasn't. And that letter brought confusion and it shook them.

Paul wants them to know that this letter is from him and it should be words of encouragement and comfort to them and I believe it was!

VERSE 18

As we have seen in Paul's letters, most of them open with the grace of God and they close with the grace of God.

And I think the reason is simple.

Think about it for a minute.

First, we are saved by grace.

Then, it is by grace we are sustained as we live out our lives.

And as our life ends, we will be received up into glory all by the grace of God.

We don't deserve any of this and yet God freely gives it to us!

Thus, it is fitting for Paul to start and end his letter with the Grace of God, as he did with many of his other letters!

And we will end this evening by saying this, “**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.**” II Thessalonians 3:18.