

Second Thessalonians

Chapter 3

Pray for Us

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored as happened among you, 2 and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

3:1 *Finally.* In 1Th 5:25 Paul simply asked for prayer; here he mentions specifics. (CSB)

Paul requests intercessory prayer for missions, for evangelism. *honored.* Received through faith. “We pray that His name may be so praised through God’s holy Word and a Christian life that we who have accepted it may abide and daily grow in it, and that it may gain approval and acceptance among other people. We pray that it may go forth with power throughout the world” (LC III 52). (TLSB)

as happened among you. Lit. “just as also with you.” The expression is general enough to cover the present as well as the past (cf. 1Th 2:13). (CSB)

3:2 *wicked.* The Greek for this word means “out of place,” and elsewhere in the NT it is used only of things (see Lk 23:41; Ac 25:5). Wickedness is always out of place. For Paul’s difficulties at Corinth (where he wrote this letter) see Ac 18:12–13. (CSB)

Persecutors (1:6) or false teachers. (TLSB)

not all have faith. Especially those who, through their whole being and life, experience the faith as a threat and an enemy who must be defeated. Saving faith is not an inherent human ability. (CSB)

3:3 *faithful.* In the Greek the word immediately follows “faith” (v. 2), putting the faithfulness of God in sharp contrast with the lack of faith in people (cf. 1Co 1:9; 10:13; 2Co 1:18). (CSB)

The Lord has shown Himself to be reliable and trustworthy; He has always kept His promises to His people (e.g., the exodus, the Promised Land, the Messiah) and will continue to keep them. Cf 1:6–7, 11–12; 2:8, 13–14. (TLSB)

guard you. Paul directs the Thessalonians and us to apostolic teaching (“the things that we command”; v 4) and to “the love of God” and “the steadfastness of Christ” (v 5). These are available to us in the means of grace. (TLSB)

3:4 *we command.* Apostolic authority on behalf of Christ (Tr 60). Today, such authority is given to those whom Christ calls into the apostolic Office of the Holy Ministry. Christ is the one working in and through the Office, using the man in it as an instrument (1Co 4:1). (TLSB)

3:5 *hearts.* The Lord turns our hearts to Him. *hearts.* The total inner person; indicates our communion with God through faith (cf 2Pt 1:4) (TLSB)

love of God. Paul is about to rebuke the idle, and is here reminding them of God's love. There should be no hard feelings among those who owe everything to the love of God. (CSB)

3:1–5 Paul requests prayer for his missionary work and obedience to what he has commanded them. We are called to listen to those whom God has given to teach and preach the pure Word (Heb 13:17; cf Ac 5:27–32). The Lord's faithfulness toward us is steadfast; He is an immovable rock. Through the Church (His Body) and her pastors, He will guard us against the attacks of the evil one, the devil, the Antichrist. • "Protect us from war, bloodshed, plagues, pestilence, and other grievous diseases. Guard us against all evil and distresses of the body. Let Your divine will, the growth of Your kingdom and the glory of Your name be accomplished in all these things. Amen." (Luth, *TLWA*, p 336). (TLSB)

Warning Against Idleness

6 Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. 9 It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. 10 For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. 11 For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. 13 As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. 14 If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

3:6 *command.* An authoritative word with a military ring. (CSB)

the name. Cf Ac 4:12. Paul has apostolic authority, and he reminded his hearers of this at the beginning of most of his Letters (cf Gal 1:1). This is also a reminder that Christ has a baptismal claim on all who have been baptized into His name. (TLSB)

keep away. Not withdrawal of all contact but withholding of close fellowship. Idleness is sinful and disruptive, but those guilty of it are still brothers (v. 15). (CSB)

brother. People should still be acknowledged as fellow Christians and not be expelled from the Church if there is yet hope for repentance. (TLSB)

idleness. The problem was mentioned in the first letter, and evidently had worsened. Paul takes it seriously and gives more attention to it in this letter than to anything else but the second coming. (CSB)

Neglecting daily responsibilities and common tasks, but also meddling in the affairs of others. Perhaps this was because they anticipated that the end of the world was imminent (2:1–3), or perhaps they were simply lazy and arrogant (cf v 11). (TLSB)

tradition. Apostolic teaching and instruction concerning everyday conduct. (TLSB)

3:7 *to imitate us.* A theme in Paul's Letters; he calls on his hearers to imitate him because he imitates Jesus (cf 1Co 11:1; Eph 5:1–21). In this case, he reminds the Thessalonians that when Silvanus, Timothy, and he were with them, they were not idle, disorderly, or undisciplined, but they "worked night and day" (v 8). (TLSB)

3:8 *nor dud we eat anyone's bread.* A Hebraism for “make a living” (see, e.g., Ge 3:19; Am 7:12). Paul is not saying that he never accepted hospitality but that he had not depended on other people for his living (see 1Th 2:9 and note). (CSB)

3:10 *anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.* Called “the Golden Rule of work.” Related to both the general and specific instructions already given orally and in writing, esp the command given in v 6. (TLSB)

Pagan parallels are in the form, “He who does not work does not eat.” But Paul gives an imperative: lit. “let him not eat.” The Christian must not be a loafer. (CSB)

3:11 *we hear.* Paul does not identify from whom or how he has heard this news, though perhaps it was through the person who had delivered 1Th. (TLSB)

busybodies. Worse than idle, they were interfering with other people's affairs, a problem to which idleness often leads. (CSB)

Didache: “See to it that, as a Christian, he shall not live with you idle. But if he wills not so to do, he is a Christ-monger. Watch that you keep aloof from such” (ANF 7:381). (TLSB)

3:12 *quietly.* Without interfering in the work of others and without arrogantly seeking to draw attention (cf vv 6, 11). (TLSB)

3:13 *do not grow weary in doing good* – In warning against idleness, Paul hopes his readers will never tire of doing what is right. If we're going to be busy, he's saying, be busy with the right. (LL)

3:14 Paul realizes that some may not heed his letter. (CSB)

have nothing to do with him. The Greek for this phrase is an unusual double compound, meaning “mix up together with” (used elsewhere in the NT only in 1Co 5:9, 11—of a similar withdrawal of close fellowship). It indicates a disassociation that will bring the person back to a right attitude. (CSB)

be ashamed. And repent. The aim is not punishment but restoration to fellowship. (CSB)

3:15 Discipline in the church should be brotherly, never harsh. (CSB)

warn. See 1Th 5:12, where the Greek for this verb is translated “admonish.” (CSB)

It is at times necessary, and indeed truly loving, for one believer to speak the word of the Law to another in order to shame that person into seeing the harmful evil of his or her ways and repenting. (TLSB)

3:6–15 Those who are idle are to be avoided and even denied fellowship in order that this might cause them to repent, amend their ways, and return to their fellow believers. Laziness is a serious sin against the God who created us and gave us talents and abilities. It is a sin against the Body of Christ, against our brothers and sisters in the Lord, to whom we have been joined and with whom we are to be co-workers. The good news is that this word of the condemning Law is not the last word. The Law shows us our need for the Savior from sin; the Gospel gives us that Savior. • Heavenly Father, I thank You that in Baptism You have broken into my life, unified me with the life of Christ, and chosen me for citizenship in Your kingdom. I praise You for this inheritance, this home, this family. I bless You for never having forgotten

me and never ceasing to yearn for me, to seek me, to call me, to offer me forgiveness anew. Amen. (TLSB)

Final Greetings

¹⁶Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. ¹⁷I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write. ¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

3:16 *Lord of peace.* The more usual phrase is “God of peace.” (CSB)

be with you all. Even the disorderly. (CSB)

A liturgical benediction and confident prayer that the Lord is indeed with them and will continue to be so. Cf Mt 28:20. (TLSB)

3:17 Paul normally dictated his letters (cf. Ro 16:22), but toward the end he added something in his own handwriting (see 1Co 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18). Here he tells us that this practice was his distinguishing mark. (CSB)

own hand. Paul has, in his usual manner, been dictating while someone else wrote. Now he writes the conclusion, a common practice in ancient letter writing. Paul knew that he had been wrongly cited for support in the spread of false teaching. His greeting is a guarantee that the Letter really comes from him. Cf Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; Phm 19. (TLSB)

3:18 Paul has criticized his offenders, but his last prayer is for everyone. (CSB)

Paul concludes his Letter with a prayer for peace and, in his own hand, a blessing of grace. We should imitate Paul in his blessing. We should pray for peace for others, even for our enemies. We should bless, and not curse, even those we do not like, even those who do us harm (Rm 12:19; 1Pt 3:9). Our prayer for God’s peace and grace in our lives is no mere wish. We do have peace with God and with one another through the blood of Christ; by the grace of our Lord, this is a peace that passes all understanding and remains steadfast regardless of external assaults by the devil (cf Eph 2:11–21; Col 1:19–20; Jn 14:27). • “O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, give to us, Your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey Your commandments and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.” Amen. (LSB, p 233). (TLSB)