

2 Thessalonians 3

Verse by Verse

Doing Good

Introduction

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3:1-5

Correction
3:6-15

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Key Topics
in 1 & 2
Thessalonians



<https://www.urbangreenup.eu/cities/urban-greenup-network-of-cities/thessaloniki.kl>

Introduction

Previously in 2 Thessalonians

- Paul began the chapter last week by encouraging the Thessalonians.
- A false idea that had evidently unsettled some of them.
- These had concluded that they were already in the **Day of the Lord**.
- Paul assured them that they were not.
- He continued by adding some specific teaching about the **Man of Lawlessness** - the future and final Antichrist.
- He will appear and will be identifiable in the end times.
- Paul ended with a short prayer and an encouragement to **stand firm**.

What's in
2 Thess 3?

Key Verse

From John
Stott

What's in 2 Thessalonians 3?

- The chapter begins with a request for prayer *from* and brief prayer *for* the Thessalonians.
- Paul then offers some advice dealing with members of the church who were behaving in an unruly way.
- It was the church's job to avoid them while Paul was hoping the disorderly brothers would get back on track.
- The apostle then closes the chapter and book with a blessing over this church that was so near to his heart.

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2 Thessalonians 3:13

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John Stott (1921 - 2011)

Paul has been peering into the future. He has foreseen and foretold both the revelation of Christ on the last day and the rebellion of Antichrist which will precede and herald it. He has also indicated that meanwhile, although the final outbreak of lawlessness is being restrained, yet 'the secret power of lawlessness is already at work' in the world (2 Thes. 2:7). In this ambiguous situation, in which evil is both operative and held in check, what is the responsibility of Christian people? How should we behave, in view of the present tension ...?

- John Stott , in *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way*

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Briefly on Prayer 3:1-5

- Paul starts with a request for prayer.
- This was his common practice - asking for prayer from the churches he wrote to.
- It's not hard to see why he needed it.
- In this case he explains his confidence, both in the Lord and in the Thessalonian believers.
- He also adds a little prayer-blessing for them.
- In it he prays for both love and steadfastness to characterize this church.

From John
Walvoord

Isaiah
55:10-11

Prayer
Requests
from Paul



John Walvoord
(1910 - 2002), Dallas
Theological Seminary

Prayer is not a spiritual gift given only to some. Prayer is the privilege of every child of God ... The marvelous thing about prayer is that every Christian is on the same level. Some believers may know more than others, but in the work of prayer each believer comes to God in the name of Christ. What more could anyone desire than that? The small child and the mature saint have equal access to the throne of grace. In writing to the Thessalonians who were young Christians and were perhaps overly occupied with their own needs, Paul urged them to pray.



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Isaiah 55:10-11

10 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven

and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,

giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;

it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

**Promise and
Prayer**

Promise and Prayer

- God has promised from ancient times that his word would accomplish his desired purposes.
- This alone gives a an incentive to proclaim God's word.
- At the same time, Paul prays - and asks for prayer that his ministry of the word would be effective.
- This is a perfect pattern.
 1. We see God's will in Scripture.
 2. We pray that God would accomplish his will.
 3. We do whatever we can on our side to see to it that God's will comes to pass.

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Prayer Requests from Paul

Romans 15:30 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf.

Colossians 4:3-4 At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison - that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

1 Thessalonians 5:25 Brothers, pray for us.



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Correction 3:6-15

- 3:6 We **command** you brothers.
- Paul doesn't use this word often, but he wants to make a serious point before things get out of hand.
- Further, he puts it **in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ**.
- It seems that there were some believers in Thessalonica that had for some reason or another stopped working.
- Worse yet, they were not simply minding their own business, but had made themselves a nuisance to others.
- Paul is very clear that this is no way for Christians to live.

Problem and
Solution

Key Verse

From Tony
Evans

Problem and Solution

The Problem

- It is not completely clear why certain believers in Thessalonica were no longer working for a living.
- They were "**walking in idleness**" - indicating an ongoing state of affairs.
- Some have suggested that they were so **certain that Jesus was coming soon**, they they assumed there was no good reason to work.
- Others have suggested they were **self-appointed teachers** in the church, who believed that the rest of the church needed to support them.

The Solution

Paul on
Working for a
Living

The Solution

- The solution Paul proposes consists of two parts.
 1. The church in Thessalonica should avoid these unruly brothers.
 - Giving them attention would only encourage them.
 - Feeding them while they were "not willing to work" would only provide an incentive to further idleness.
 2. The disorderly or idle brothers need to be encouraged to get to work like anyone else in the church.
 - This was the example that Paul tried to set when among them.
 - While it is fine for pastors or missionaries to receive support from the church, that was not what was happening in this case.

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Paul on Working for a Living

- **Ephesians 4:28**

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

- **1 Thessalonians 2:9**

For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

- **1 Thessalonians 4:10-12**

But we urge you, brothers, ... 11 ... to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, 12 so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

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- **2 Thessalonians 3:13**

As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.

- Compare with **Galatians 6:9**

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.



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There are four tiers of responsibility.

- First is personal responsibility: you shouldn't expect anybody else to do for you what you ought and are able to do for yourself (see 3:6-8).
- The second tier is family responsibility. Relatives are to care for each other: "If anyone does not provide for his own family, . . . [he] is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim 5:8).
- If the family can't help, then there's church responsibility (see 1 Tim 5:9-10, 16); after all, it's God's extended family.
- State responsibility is to be the very last tier. Unfortunately, for many, the state is tier number one in addressing human need. It is the primary role of civil government to maintain a safe, just, righteous, and compassionately responsible environment for freedom and personal responsibility to flourish (see Rom 13:1-7).



Tony Evans, Bible Teacher
and Commentator



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Benediction 3:16-18

- **3:16** Paul closes with a prayer-blessing of **peace** - and to be thorough, he asks that it be "in all times and every way."
- 3:18 He follows that with a blessing of **grace** - **Grace and peace** - possibly Paul's two favorite words.
- **3:17** Now Paul signs the letter.
- In **2 Thess. 2:2** he mentioned the possibility of a forged letter claiming to be from him. This is one way to avoid that trick.
- Perhaps **Silvanus** (aka *Silas*) actually wrote this letter, acting as a secretary to Paul (See 2 Thess. 1:1).
- Peter used **Silvanus** in exactly this way. He says in **1 Peter 5:12**,
By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.

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Key Topics in 1 & 2 Thessalonians

- These are a few of the topics Paul covered in these Thessalonians letters:
 - The simple **Gospel** in which the Thessalonians had believed.
 - The need to **Stand Firm** in the midst of trials.
 - The power of the **Thessalonians' Example**.
 - A Christian **Work Ethic**.
 - A biblical view of the **End Times** - as in **Bible Prophecy**.

The Gospel

Standing
Firm

The
Thessalonian
Example

Work Ethic

End Times
Prophecy

The Gospel

The Good News of Jesus Christ can be summed up in his dying for our sins, rising from the dead, and saving us from the wrath of God.

1 Thess 4:14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so ...

1 Thess 5:9-10 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.



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Standing Firm

- Paul expected the church to stand firm in the things that he and his missionary team taught them.
- This was a church full of new believers.
- He did not want them to waver in their faith.
- This would be especially important when there was pressure from the outside coming upon them.
- Persecution might have come from the Greeks, the Romans, or the Jews - or some combination of these.



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The Thessalonian Example

- **1 Thessalonians 1:6-10**

6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.

- These believers turned to God from idols and then broadcast their faith in the surrounding area.
- While still new in their faith and in the midst of trials, they were not held back in outreach, discipleship or evangelism.



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Work Ethic

- We have repeatedly seen that Paul, though he had every right to earn a living off of his ministry, tended to avoid that in his missionary settings.
- He might receive support from other churches, or, as often as not, he and his team would work to supply their own needs.
- One of the reasons for that might have been that the Greeks tended to downplay the value of work.
- Paul made clear that hard work made the gospel look better, and was the usual way that God provided for us.



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End Times Prophecy

- These letters give us prophetic teaching in at least **three distinct areas**.

1. **The Rapture of the Church** - There will come a day when Jesus will return and the dead in Christ will rise. That will be tied to the transformation of all living believers in Christ.
2. **The Man of Lawlessness** - Paul affirms that there will be a final Antichrist figure who will attempt to rule and receive worship from everyone on earth.
3. **Final Judgment** - leading to both eternal rewards and eternal punishment.



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- It was the church's job to avoid them while Paul was hoping the disorderly brothers would get back on track.
- The apostle then closed the chapter and book with a blessing over this church that was so very near to his heart.

Paul's
Teaching

Key Verse

From
Charles
Spurgeon

A Final
Prayer

Paul's Teaching

Paul taught this church - and we might say all his churches - in at least **three ways**.

- **Verbal Instruction** - When Paul was with the church, he spent much of his time teaching and explaining the Scriptures.
- **Personal Example** - Paul was not afraid to point to his own life. While he was often the subject of personal attacks, he was determined to live a life of integrity. He practiced what he preached.
- **Written Instruction** - Letters like these supplemented Paul's in-person teaching. He cleared up both doctrinal and ethical questions that might arise and gave solutions to problems that the church was currently facing.

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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.



Charles Spurgeon
(1834 - 1892),
London Pastor

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A Final Prayer

Dear heavenly Father,

- We thank you for these instructions from Paul, given to the Thessalonian believers.
- We pray that you would help us to take them to heart.
- Help us to stand firm in our faith even in the midst of trials.
- Help us to work hard in whatever setting you call us to work, and in that way provide a positive example to others relating to our faith.
- And help us to always be watching and waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ's return.
- Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!
- Amen.

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