

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **2Thessalonians 3:7-13.**
- B. Paul concludes his second letter to the Thessalonians encouraging them again to be obedient.
- C. Here is a brief review of the lessons we have studied in 1&2Thessalonians:
 - 1. What every church should be--assured.
 - 2. Encouragement can come from a letter, or acting as a mother or father.
 - 3. There should be stability in our Xian growth--we are to be established in the faith.
 - 4. Those who practice sexual immortality are not ready to meet X.
 - 5. Jesus will come back without warning and the dead in X shall rise first.
 - 6. To prepare for His coming involves living a sanctified life.
 - 7. Jesus will come back to take the faithful home and deal out retribution to the wicked.
 - 8. A "man of lawlessness" will appear, but that should not shake their faith.
- D. In chapter 3, we will look at four great motivators for obedience:
 - 1. The exhortation of the word.
 - 2. The example of the apostle.
 - 3. The encouragement of the church.
 - 4. The enablement of the Lord.

I. SHARE THE TRUTH.

- A. Scripture text: 2Th. 3:1-5.
Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; 2 and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. 5 And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.
- B. See Psa. 147:15.
He sends forth His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly.
- C. See Ac. 13:48-49. Of course, the great commission is still in force.
And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. 49 And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region.
- D. We are not to be surprised if our efforts are challenged. Satan is still alive and well, seeking to disrupt the progress of the gospel and the church.
- E. However, Paul is confident in the Thessalonian brethren. He gives them this word of assurance which also in effect puts them "on the spot" to do what he said.

II. THE EXHORTATION OF THE WORD.

- A. Scripture text: 2Th. 3:6.
Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.
- B. This may very well be the main reason for writing the letter (2Th.). Some were being very lazy and living a life not acceptable to X. Some commentators go so far as to say that they sold their possessions, left their jobs, and were living off the generosity of the church. They were doing this because they thought Jesus would be coming back very, very soon.
- C. Paul says these brethren were "unruly" or "disorderly." This is in direct conflict with the military type term "command" found at the end of 3:4. To live in such a way is sin!
- D. Paul and his companions were hard workers when among the Thessalonians.
- E. Many times is Scripture God calls people to go to work for him while they were at work doing something else:

1. Moses was caring for sheep (Ex. 3).
2. Joshua was Moses' servant before becoming his successor (Ex. 33:11).
3. Gideon was threshing wheat (Jud. 6:11ff).
4. Saul was looking for his lost donkeys and David was caring for his father's sheep.
5. The apostle himself was a tentmaker (Ac. 18:1-3).

III. THE EXAMPLE OF THE APOSTLE.

A. Scripture text: 2Th. 3:7-10.

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, **8** nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; **9** not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example. **10** For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat.

- B. The apostle Paul had a right to collect financial support for his work for the Lord. But he gave up that right so he could be a better example to the brethren; an example of a hard worker (1Cor. 9:6-7, 14). Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? **7** Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard, and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?... **14** So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.
- C. Selfish leaders build up themselves, their support, and their rights. Paul shows the attitude of servant leadership in that he builds up others, help with their needs, and gives privileges to others.
- D. There is a difference between *authority* and *stature*. Stature comes when one obeys the Word and serves people in the will of God. Only this type of person should then be given authority.

IV. THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE BRETHERN.

A. Scripture text: 2Th. 3:11-15.

For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. **12** Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. **13** But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. **14** And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. **15** And *yet* do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

- B. Here is a key verse for the entire section (3:13). Paul made a similar command to the Galatian churches in Gal. 6:9-10.

And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. **10** So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

- C. Paul mentions several problems:

1. Being undisciplined (Xians are to be organized, on time, and prepared).
2. Doing no work at all (Xians are to be workers, never lazy in doing the right things).
3. Being a busybody (lit. "to be working around," Xians are not to be fooling around when they ought to be working).

- D. What to do about the problems:

1. Do not grow weary in doing good.
2. Do not associate with those who practice an undisciplined, lazy, busybody life.
3. Admonish him as a brother in X for the purpose of changing his life, not losing it to Satan.

- E. I find it very interesting that Paul repeated the command of 1Th. 4:11-12 in 2Th. 3:12.

(2Th 3:12) Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

(1Th 4:11-12) ...and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you; **12** so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

V. **THE ENABLEMENT OF THE LORD.**

A. Scripture text: 2Th. 3:16-18.

Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! **17** I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write. **18** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

B. Paul's prayer is more important than we think. In the context of these letters the "man of lawlessness" is about to appear and there will be tough times ahead for the church.

C. His prayer also suggests that Jesus is ready to grant us peace in every circumstance. We should not worry or be afraid. Just as Jesus said he would always be with us (Mt. 28:20); Paul asks that the Lord's protective care be with all the Thessalonian brethren.

D. The statement of 3:17 is most interesting. It would seem to me that this special mark and Paul's calling attention to it is because of some false letters that had previously come to them (2Th. 2:2).
...that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

E. Grace empowers! Paul prays that the grace of God be with all of them. They will become all they need to be if they will stay in the grace of God (1Cor. 15:10).

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

CONCLUSION & INVITATION.

A. Paul wanted the Thessalonians (and everyone else) to be ready for the coming of Christ.

B. These two letters were written not to explain everything about the second coming, but to assure the brethren of how to be ready for that coming.

C. Being a Xian and walking faithfully is the best preparation of all.

D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.