

Topic	Christian Responsibilities
Reference	2-Thessalonians 3:1-18
Date	26 November 2017
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Our scripture today divides neatly into three separate parts. The first is the prayer. It is a prayer of Paul and it really goes from verse 1 to 5. The second section is the pronouncement of Paul to the Thessalonian Christians. The third is the parting, the last few verses are the parting words of Paul to the church there in Thessalonica, but the main points that I want to go over today with you are

- I. The Love of God is the animating purpose behind everything He does and directs us to do. V: 5*
- II. Don't stop doing good for any reason. (There are many reasons why one might stop.) V: 13*
- III. The promise of Peace through Jesus Christ our Lord. V:16*
- IV. Conclusion: Peace and Purpose of God were Purchased at the Cross.*

3:1 Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you,

So the Thessalonian Christians were dedicated, committed Christian people who love the Lord, but they were enduring some persecution and some hardships and those were causing people to behave in ways that were unbecoming to a Christian and he

3:2 and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.

Even in our day as Christians, as we try to exercise our faith, we have people that stand in opposition to us. People that don't want to see the gospel of Jesus Christ spread and we have to have courage to oppose that in a way that is proper and appropriate in our context, but we also need to remember that it is not these evil wicked man that we wrestle against but that we wrestle against not flesh and blood but principalities and powers and spiritual and high places and so we have to be conscious that we don't focus our opposition on persons, even though it comes through people directly and sometimes they are very hard to ignore but God wants us to have a bigger picture and to look at the situation through the eyes of faith.

3:3 But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.

The evil one here is Satan itself. So once the Lord has our hearts, he is committed to guarding us until the day of redemption.

3:4 And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command.

The reason for his confidence was that he spent time with them. He knows these people and they have confidence because he has observed their life and their manner that you are doing and will do the things that we command.

3:5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

I would like for you to consider this verse here. We have Paul saying that God will do something now, praying that God will do something for the Thessalonians. He wants God to direct their hearts, that's a remarkable phrase if you stop and think about it that God would direct their hearts. The heart has direction. It moves towards one thing or another, it moves in the direction of that which it is sat on. It moves in regard to what it deems is attractive and valuable and sometimes we as Christians we find the attractions of the world to be greater than the attraction and value that we place on our relationship with God and we are led astray and we sometimes lose ground in our walk with the Lord, so Paul is praying that God would give their hearts a sight of the love of God as the more attractive and satisfying and valuable promise than those of earthly things. So he says, may the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God. What would this be other than an experience of God's love and it must be that, even though we are Christians this movement from where we are into the love of God is needed, otherwise Paul would not have prayed for it. Therefore, the experience of the love of God is different from time to time and from person to person. Here as we Christians have all tested of the love of God, the love that he has for us and we have been drawn into trusting all that God is for us in Jesus, but our hearts are not always steadfast. I think all of us realize in our own walk where we come up short.

They drift and they weaver, they are distracted by the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. This is why we need revival and actually that's what revival is. Revival is first the answer to Paul's prayer in Thessalonians 3:5 and he says may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God. When the Lord takes hold of the hearts of his people and directs them into the love of God, they experience the outpouring of the love of God through the Holy Spirit. When that happens to a lot of people in the same time, in the same place, we call that revival. I pray that God would grant us a unique visitation of his presence in our congregation in our midst. I pray that God would send the revival right here.

When the love of God is not present, your spirituality simply becomes superficial and your good deeds become self-centered and your sacrifices are insincere. In any relationship where love is not your motivation, you can expect it to feel bland and unfulfilling.

What happens when we truly experience God's love.

- You realize how sinful, small and helpless you are.
- You realize how awesome and holy God is.
- You realize what your sin caused and cost in the death of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son and have real contrition for that!
- You repent of your sin and continuously repent of your sin.
 - Sin as a principle or condition of human behavior and choice.
 - Sins are individual acts committed against the holiness of God.
- You endeavor to live a humble and submissive life through the indwelling Spirit of holy God.
- You want to see God's will have accomplished here on earth and in your life.
- You are committed to remaining faithful (steadfast) in Him until death or His return.

The word steadfast literally means to remain or abide under, this suggest not avoiding or running from challenges and pressures of life but staying obedient to God.

Thayer's Lexicon says '*steadfastness is the quality of patient endurance and continuance in a person who does not swerve from his deliberate purpose and faith even through the greatest trials and sufferings.*'

The Pronouncement:

3:6 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.

The situation that was going in Thessalonica in that time, they were under persecution, some people probably couldn't work, that's not really what is in view here. There were people who wouldn't work and these people were actually living off the church in the benevolence of the church and that's what was going on in this time and Paul told these Christian brothers, some of whom were getting bitter about being taken advantage of, to not be weary in well doing but be steadfast in the faith and in our service to God.

Some were not working as they were thinking that the Lord is coming back soon and it just wasn't the appropriate thing to be doing with their time, yet they ask the congregation to support

them and the leadership of the church and the governing body of the church, they need to consider very carefully, the role of benevolence in the community.

3:14 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.

When you have the love of God present in your life, you can't look at a brother in the Lord with contempt, may be some of the things that they do are contemptable but the Bible says that if you love God you must love your brother and if you don't love your brother then you don't love God and so we see brothers and sisters that are taken in sin, who have diverted from the faith and our position is not to ostracize them or to cast them out but to distance ourselves from them and do not have close social and spiritual relationships with them that the power of God and the conviction of the Holy Spirit would rest on their life for their error and that they would be corrected.

When you think about these Thessalonian Christians and the fact that they were weary in doing things, I can think of a lot of excuses that people make for not doing good any longer after that was a part of their life. Some say, it takes so much effort to keep doing good and yes it does, but when the power of god rest on your life and the Holy Spirit is living in you, you find strength from him to do that which is right and not in your own flesh. Another might say, it take so much self-denial to keep doing good but I would say to you, it is worth it when we consider the reward.

Another might say, it just brings me persecution, it just brings me problems and obstacles when I try to do good and I would say to you that don't let that suffering or that persecution discourage you from doing what Jesus would have you do in being good and benevolent to others around you.

The promise of the peace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

3:16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace, at all times, in every way. The Lord be with you all. De Kyrios Eirene autos

3:17 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.

3:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

So it is interesting to me that the same way Paul starts out the letter to the Thessalonians, is the very same way he ends it with grace and peace and a blessing from God the father. So Paul concludes that this peace and purpose in life come by considering the prince of peace and the purpose that was purchased at the cross. Peace is something that only God can give God whole

purpose of his work in our life is to conform me into the image of Christ that he might reveal himself through me to the world. His love through me, his grace through me, his kindness through me. God wants to live his life in us, so that we can reach the world that we will reveal Christ in our lives.

We suffer unimaginable loss when we fail to make room in our lives for that which may cost us something dear. Jesus is to us is a symbolic sacrifice to save us. He lifts us up from the depths of our depravity and he sets our feet on solid ground. He gives us eternal life and he reconciles us to God by his own blood.

Where do you stand with Jesus today? What is the reality of your walk? Do you know him intimately, personally, powerfully. That is available to you because of the love of God and I would submit to you that if you are not experiencing that then your eyes have been taken off of the love of God in your own life and what he has done for you.