

A Study of 2 Thessalonians



Paul begins his conclusion of this letter in 3:1 when he says “Finally, brothers.” He has addressed meaty subjects having to do with the return of Christ and the man of lawlessness. Throughout the letter there is the constant call to stand firm. In chapter 3, we read a prayer of Paul for the Thessalonian Christians, a warning against idleness, and an expression of confidence in these young Christians.

A Call For Prayer 3:1-2

We often read of Paul’s prayer for the churches, but here we have a request for prayer from Paul. His prayer was not primarily for personal benefit, but rather a request made on behalf of a lost world. The form of the word for prayer used here indicates a continuous act of prayer. The need for evangelism was ongoing so this should be a constant prayer of the church.

Paul could look at how the gospel penetrated into the pagan community in Thessalonica and look with joy at how the believers had responded to Christ. His desire is that this same positive reception of the gospel message might be seen elsewhere.

The word translated as “speed ahead” is a word that originally was used of a warrior running into battle.¹ The idea is that there is great urgency in evangelism and Paul’s desire is to speed ahead taking the gospel to those who are lost.

Coupled with the advance of the message of the gospel is a desire for it to be honoured. The word translated as “honoured” in the ESV can also be rendered as “glorified.” It was not enough just for people to “hear” the message, the desire is that people would receive it gladly and see it as God’s herald of salvation.

- 1. What steps can the church today take to assure that we are also praying for, and working toward, the rapid spread of the gospel around the world?**
- 2. Why is evangelism an urgent matter?**
- 3. Do you believe most Christians see an urgency in evangelism? What has led you to this conclusion? How do you personally feel about the urgency of the gospel message?**

¹ Smith, James E. *Teacher’s Commentary: Eschatological Epistles*. Lulu, 2011, p. 123.

The second part of Paul's prayer is that he and his companions might be "delivered from unreasonable and evil men." Paul writes this letter from Corinth where the Jews were opposing him strenuously. His desire is that he be "delivered" or "rescued" from those who opposed him. This was not because of fear for what they might do to him, but because it would hinder the preaching of the gospel.

Those who were involved in Paul's persecution are described as "wicked" and "evil." Their persecution against Paul and the gospel came because of their unbelief.

A Promise of Protection 3:3

In a world where faithless men persecute Christians stands a faithful God. He will "establish" or support and "guard" against the attacks of the evil one. These promises must have greatly encouraged the Thessalonian Christians who faced persecution from those around them.



- 4. What form does God's faithfulness, support, and protection take? (Consider this in light of the fact that every apostle except John died as a martyr.)**

Paul sees Satan (the evil one) as a real evil being. There are those who teach that Satan is not a real being, but rather a personification of evil. The Bible does not see Satan as an abstract evil, but as a real created being who is constantly hostile to God and opposed to the truth all who love the truth.

- 5. Describe the work and power of Satan along with the limitations of his power. (See 1 John 5:19; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 4:4; 1 Cor. 10:13)**

Though Satan is powerful, God's people should not despair. God's power is greater than that of the Evil One and God can protect all those who love him.

An Expectation of Perseverance 3:4-5

Paul expressed a great confidence in the faithfulness of the Thessalonian Christians. He was confident that they would do that they had been taught and remain obedient to the truth. His confidence is not baseless, but grounded in the conviction that God was at work amongst the Thessalonian Christians. He had observed the faithfulness of the believers and their desire to obey his inspired teachings and writings so he had every expectation they would continue to live faithful lives.

- 6. How does an expression of confidence help to encourage and build up another?**

Paul's confidence was further bolstered by his prayers for them. His prayers were specific and aimed at the Thessalonian's faithfulness to God. In verse 5 Paul prays that "the Lord" might "direct" their "hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ."

7. What is the meaning of the word "hearts" in verse 5?

The word translated as "steadfastness" means endurance in difficulty. Paul was not expecting these young Christians to be able to avoid persecution by faithless men or that the Evil One would leave them alone. He was confident that these believers, who loved God and his truth, would persevere. His prayer is that all this might be so and that God might continue to work among them to this end.