

## 2 Thessalonians RT. 66 Lesson

### Instructions for Daily Living

**“If we refuse to practice, it is not God’s grace that fails when a crisis comes, but our own nature ... God regenerates us and puts us in contact with all His divine resources, but He cannot make us walk according to His will.”**

Oswald Chambers

### IN A NUTSHELL

*Godly and useful living requires self-discipline and purposeful choices. We do not advance in our Christian faith automatically; it takes determination and right choices. Paul commanded the Thessalonians to focus on respectable and responsible living and to hold tightly to orthodox belief. In these ways they would be useful in God’s kingdom.<sup>1</sup>*

#### Encouragement to Continue in Faith (3:3–4)

***Supporting Idea:** While people may disappoint and fail us, God remains faithful to those who belong to him. He protects us from the attacks of Satan and evil men. Paul expressed his confidence that the Thessalonians would continue to obey the true teachings of the gospel.*

**3:3.** People may prove fickle, even deceitful, but **the Lord is faithful**. Paul often used contrasts to make his point and drive home the truth more forcefully. Just as he contrasted Jesus and the Antichrist, here he contrasted faithless men with a faithful Lord. Whatever humans can hurl against the Christian, God always triumphs, because he is faithful and unrelenting in his purposes. He has made a covenant between himself and humankind and sealed it with the blood of Jesus Christ. God remains trustworthy and dependable in his covenant relationships.

Knowing this truth instills confidence that God **will strengthen and protect you from the evil one**. Paul gave strong affirmation that God would accomplish inner stability and outer protection for the Christian. Despite the persecutions, despite evil men, despite Satan himself. God’s commitment to his children assures us that no one shall prevail against us. This does not mean we will not suffer difficulties, hardships, or even martyrdom (as was obvious from their own experiences). But it does mean that nothing can overcome those who belong to Christ. God is in control, and he keeps a protective guard around the believer. When Christians experience harm

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<sup>1</sup> Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 122.

or even death because of righteousness, it is not evil which triumphs, but the plan of God which succeeds.

**3:4.** After declaring that the Lord works faithfully on behalf of believers, Paul commended the Thessalonians for their devotion as they continued **to do the things we command**. The Christian life always has these two forces at work: the power of God and the willful obedience of the believer. Christianity is an engaged faith with an interacting Lord.

Paul's confidence rested in the Lord. He was certain that God would produce in these Christians a willingness to obey (Phil. 2:13) and that they would continue to respond in faith, just as they had in the past.

**3:5.** Paul recognized that the Thessalonians continued to encounter persecution and that false teachers infiltrated the best of churches, so he offered a prayer: **May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.**

Paul understood that Christ's involvement with the human spirit created the proper conditions for believers to respond in faith. He prayed for Christ's intervention so the inner spirit of the Thessalonians could fully experience the love of God. He desired for them a deep, experiential comprehension of God's love, an understanding of which would produce in them steadfast obedience and love (Phil. 1:9–10).

Paul's prayer that their hearts be directed into Christ's perseverance contains a twofold meaning. First, misunderstandings about Christ's second coming had disrupted the Thessalonian church, producing anxiety and impatience concerning his return. Through his prayer, Paul wanted to produce patience in these people. Second, their own hardships required a steady faith. Christ was their example, as he "learned obedience from what he suffered" (Heb. 5:8). Paul's prayer also contained the same theme he so eloquently wrote of when he described the sufferings and humility of Christ, which he urged believers to imitate (Phil. 2).<sup>2</sup>

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about the future, that great day we all anticipate when Christ returns. But we should not neglect today. Paul wanted these believers to commit themselves to living worthy lives, running with endurance toward the goal to which Christ had called them.

## PRINCIPLES

- The spread of the gospel to other people depends upon the prayers and faithful work of Christians.
- The gospel does not always find receptive hearts.
- God is faithful in every respect.
- All Christians who can work should do so with integrity and industry.

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<sup>2</sup> Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 125–126.

- Christians should model responsible behavior before their families and others.
- Believers should help people but not presume to run their lives.
- Disobedience among believers should not be ignored. Church discipline should be imposed, especially in cases of willful waywardness.
- Churches must enact discipline unapologetically, yet with gentle care and concern.
- The goal of church discipline is restoration.

## APPLICATIONS

- Prayer is not only a gift but a hard work in which the believer must engage for the welfare of others and the continued progress of the gospel. We need to develop greater compassion and self-discipline in this area.
- Rather than become discouraged when people reject the gospel, we must pray more fervently that God will open the minds of unbelievers.
- Christians should build a reputation for hard work, personal integrity, and a willingness to go beyond the minimum requirements of a job.
- We should also develop a reputation for kindness, helpfulness, and tact. We should refuse to gossip, use our time wisely, and not succumb to laziness.
- Everyone in the church has a responsibility to keep other Christians accountable in their personal lives through meaningful friendships and encouragement.
- Churches should develop a standard, unbiased process of disciplinary action for those who sin and require intervention.<sup>3</sup>

## ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you consider your job, and how do you see it in relation to God's kingdom?
2. What is your attitude toward work?
3. Do you know someone who models a balanced view of work? Discuss how that person's actions show his or her heart attitude.
4. Discuss society's responses toward the unemployed, those on welfare, or in low-status jobs. Has studying this chapter challenged or changed your position? In what way?<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 132–133.

<sup>4</sup> Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 137.