

2Thessalonians, Chapter Three, Lesson One

CHRIST HONORING LEADERSHIP 2Thessalonians 3:1-5

STIMULATE

** In our study last week, the apostle Paul showed us eight ways to encourage and strengthen our brothers and sisters in Christ; so that they may live each day “**Having Faith in the Truth**”. Let’s review what we learned together from chapter two of 2Thessalonians regarding how Paul encouraged and strengthened their hearts and walk with the Lord.

1. He gave thanks to God for them. (V.13)
2. He reminded them that they are beloved by the Lord. (V.13)
3. He reminded them that God had chosen them.(V.13)
4. He reminded them that God set them apart.(V.13)
5. He reminded them that he was personally involved in their lives (our gospel). (V.14)
6. He encouraged them to stand firm on the truth.(V.15)
7. He encouraged them to hold onto the truth.(V.15)
8. He prayed for them to be comforted and strengthened by God Himself. (V.17)

** I hope that you have been faithful to proclaim God’s saving truth whenever He has provided the opportunity and that you will encourage and strengthen your fellow saints with these marvelous truths.

MOTIVATE

** Today, the apostle Paul is going to begin to close out his letter to the Thessalonians. Over the next three studies together, Paul is going to show us:

CHRIST HONORING LEADERSHIP - 2Thessalonians 3:1-5

CHRIST HONORING FELLOWSHIP - 2Thessalonians 3:6-10

CHRIST HONORING ADMONITION - 2Thessalonians 3:11-18

For today, I would like you to consider the following question. What makes a spiritual leader into someone others can follow? What is the one characteristic that he or she must possess in order to be considered credible? For the answer, please join me now in 2Thessalonians 3:1-5 as Paul paints a word of picture for us of “Christ Honoring Leadership**”.

Read passage (V.1-5)

Opening Prayer

If we can observe and then genuinely follow this pattern, God will be able to use us, just as he did Paul, for the building up of the saints and the advancement of the kingdom.

Christ Honoring Leadership

INVESTIGATE

V. 1 ** Up to this point in his letter, what has been Paul’s main concern for his beloved Thessalonian brothers and sisters?

The spiritual stability of the saints living there in Thessalonica. He has been encouraging and strengthening them from the beginning of his letter.

For example:

Chapter 1

V.3 Give thanks to God for them

V.4 Speak proudly of them

V.5 Considered worthy of the kingdom

V.6-9 God's justice in pouring out His judgment upon the wicked

V.10-12 Glorified with Christ

Chapter 2

V.1-2 Do not be shaken or disturbed

V.3-10 Teaching of end time events

V.11-12 God's righteous judgment

V.13 God's choosing them for salvation

V.14-15 Encouraging and strengthening them to stand firm and hold onto the truth

V.16-17 Praying for their comfort and strength while walking with the Lord

** Having observed Paul do all of that, one might conclude that the Thessalonians were helpless babes in the faith and that Paul was the spiritual giant; who had his own act so together, he did not need anyone's help. To completely dispel that notion, what does Paul now do to elevate the view which the Thessalonians might have of themselves?

He says "Finally" or in conclusion to all that he has been saying, I need for you young believers there in Thessalonica to "pray for us".

Paul does not exalt himself above his reader, because he is an apostle of Jesus Christ. Rather, he displays the one characteristic of "**Christ Honoring Leadership**", which is true humility. Paul now humbly bears the need of his own heart and he depends upon the faithful prayers of these same Thessalonian saints.

The word used by Paul here for pray (proseuchomai) is an imperative in an emphatic position. This leaves no doubt in our minds as to how important it was for Paul to have these baby Christians praying for him. Further, Paul puts it in the present continuous tense, so that it literally means "pray continually".

cf. 1Thessalonians 5:25, Ephesians 6:19, Philippians 1:19, Colossians 4:2-3

** For what does Paul want them to specifically pray?

"...that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified..."

** What instrument is being used here by God for the rapid spreading of the word?

The mouth of the apostle Paul - remember Colossians 4:3, "...so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ..."

** Besides the apostle Paul spreading the truth of the gospel, how else does God rapidly spread His precious truth?

God chooses to use all who hear and believe in the truth to then spread it throughout the world. cf. 2Timothy 2:2, Acts 1:8

** Paul uses an interesting phrase when he says, “that the word...may be glorified”. How is that accomplished?

There is a double imagery going on here. On the one hand, we have “the word of the Lord” contained in the gospel which we share with the lost around us. On the other hand, “the word” which we share is Jesus Christ Himself. He is the word of God, and is to be glorified by our faithful witness. cf. John 1:1, 14, and Revelation 19:13 with Philipians 2:9-11

** According to verse one here in 2Thessalonians, chapter three, had that already taken place?

Absolutely - Paul says, “...just as it did also with you...” God’s word had spread rapidly and brought glory to the person of Jesus Christ, God incarnate, in the area of Thessalonica.

** So is Paul losing his humility here, becoming puffed up by saying he was a great evangelist?

No - Paul knew Who causes the growth. cf. 1Corinthians 3:1-7

V. 2 ** In verse two, instead of claiming to be someone great, what does Paul do to show his vulnerability?

He asks them to pray for his deliverance from perverse and evil men! Perverse translates atopos, which means “out of place” or “strange”. Paul is not a self-proclaiming Superman, he desperately needs the Thessalonians to pray on his behalf. There is a great object lesson for us here. We are never “stand alone” Christians, but rather we need one another continually.

** Why would Paul feel that he would need deliverance?

Everywhere Paul traveled, he encountered a violent reaction to the proclamation of the truth.
All see - Acts 16:16-22

Four years after writing this letter to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote to the Corinthians the account of his many sufferings for the cause of Christ (2Corinthians 11:23-26). He was correct, he definitely needed their prayers.

** Back in 2Thessalonians 3:2, from where do these perverse and evil men come?

Paul says, “...for not all have faith.” This is the unsaved world around, of which Jesus said, “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and **many are those who enter by it** (Matthew 7:13).

V. 3 ** Who does Paul now contrast with these men of no faith?

The Lord Jesus Christ, who is “faithful”.

** Here again, the apostle makes a subtle shift in his thinking designed to demonstrate his complete humility. Having just asked for prayer that the Lord might deliver him from evil men, of what does he now reassure the Thessalonians?

The Lord “will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.” Paul’s oneness with his readers allows him to shift back and forth between them and himself because they both share the same humble needs and are mutually, ultimately dependent upon our gracious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

** According to this verse, who is behind the perverse and evil men of no faith and is launching this all out attack against Christians?

“...the evil one...” Satan is the driving force behind the “mystery of lawlessness” which we saw back in chapter two, verse seven. cf. 1Thessalonians 2:18, 3:5 and 2Thessalonians 2:9

** Are there any passages of Scripture that reassure our hearts of the protection the Lord affords us from the “evil one”.

Absolutely - We belong to Christ and He protects us!

James 4:7 “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

1John 4:4 “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”

...and from last week

Romans 8:31 “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?”

V. 4 ** Paul’s next comment is profoundly wise. Why is that?

He says, “And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you...” True wisdom trusts completely and exclusively in the Lord Jesus Christ. That trust and confidence will radically effect how we live. cf. Philippians 1:6 with Proverbs 3:5-6 and Psalm 37:1-5

** In verse four Paul mentions two elements of the life which the Thessalonians lived out in Christ. What were those two elements?

The present - “...that you are doing...”

The future - “...that you will continue to do...”

** Paul was thrilled that the Thessalonians were doing all that he had commanded them, while he was speaking to them under the direction of the Holy Spirit. He also knew that they would continue in their obedience to the Word of God. But what about their past? What about our past? What about those times in our past when we have let the Lord down or dishonored His name? What are we to do with that?

FORGET IT! All see - Philippians 3:13-14, and then press on toward the goal of honoring Christ in everything. cf. Isaiah 6:1-8 and 1John 1:8-9

V. 5 ** As Paul continues to humble himself, and exalt the walk of the Thessalonians with the Lord, what two things make up his desire for them?

1) That the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God...

2) That the Lord would direct their hearts into the “steadfastness of Christ”.

This is the third time Paul has prayed for their hearts. It becomes quite obvious that a relationship with Christ will always come down to the issue of the heart.

cf. 1Thessalonians 3:13, 2Thessalonians 2:17, Ephesians 3:17-19

** What happens to a believer’s lifestyle as he is directed into the love of God?

Obedience results - the more we love Him, the more we desire to glorify Him in our heartfelt obedience. cf. John 14:15 "If you love me..." John 15:14 "...if you do what I command you."

** What does Paul mean by being directed into the "steadfastness of Christ"?

By the direction of the Holy Spirit and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are made able to stand firm in the truth of God's Word. cf. 2Timothy 4:7

** Had the Thessalonians already displayed this God-given ability in their walk with the Lord through faith?

Yes - They are merely being encouraged to continue, with the Lord's help.
cf. 2Thessalonians 1:4

EXTRICATE

** As we consider the author of this passage, what characteristic made him stand out as an example of "**Christ Honoring Leadership**"?

He continually displayed genuine humility, although chosen by Christ Himself to be an apostle.(Acts 9:15)

** How did we see the genuine humility of Paul today?

- 1) Exposing his potential weakness to them.
- 2) Asking for prayer.
- 3) Identifying with his reader as equals before God.
- 4) Being dependent on them for his victory.

DELINEATE

** Is it possible for me to be used by God, like Paul was, for the building up of the saints and for the advancement of the kingdom?

Absolutely - God has chosen each one of us and gifted each one of us for His express purpose and will. cf. 1Peter 4:10

EVALUATE

** What am I going to have to be willing to do in order to become more like the apostle Paul and my Lord Jesus Christ?

Become more humble!

- 1) Be willing to identify with other Christians
- 2) Avoid false humility (shyness or low self-esteem)
- 3) Do not think too highly of myself. cf. Romans 12:3

ACTIVATE

** We need to ask the Lord to direct our hearts humbly into His love and steadfastness, causing us to stand firm in the power of His might while we strive to display "**Christ Honoring Leadership**" for His glory.

Closing prayer