

2nd Thessalonians Ch 3

“Christian Conduct”

As we come to closing comments that the Holy Spirit utters to us through the instrument of the apostle Paul in this book of 2nd Thess, the focus (for me) seems to lie on Christian conduct. and Though there is certainly more to consider concerning the conduct of the Christian than what’s laid out for us in these brief 18 vs, and even more in this very ch than the things that we’ll major on. The way I see it as the text lays out, there seems to be basically 3 primary keys that sort of jump out at me as we sort of outline this ch that the apostle is seeking to communicate to us concerning some basic, yet essential means by which we’re to conduct ourselves as Christians. And they are #1 “Prayer” as seen in vs 1-2, #2 “Practice” or practicalities in vs 6-12 and #3 “Persistence” as seen in vs 14, and to me these are sort of the 3 main keys that unlock the heart of this ch.

Now you recall that primary reason Paul wrote this letter was due to some misunderstandings concerning the coming of Christ, they were abounding in love, excelling in faith, but floundering in hope. The guaranteed certainty and assured expectation that Christ would return again to receive them to Himself before the wrath of God was poured out upon the earth had been robbed from them. They were being heavily persecuted, there were people who were saying that Christ had already returned for His church and that they were experiencing the Great Tribulation. God’s wrath was being poured out, and they were right in the throws of it, there was a letter being circulated, or at the very least people saying they’d seen a letter that Paul himself had written affirming that fact, and so they were discomfited to say the least. They’d been taught that as children of God that, *“God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.”* 1 Thess 5:9-10

and Yet here they were, all confused, being persecuted, believing Christ had come and they’d missed out, and so Paul writes to them to re-establish them in hope, to know that God hasn’t left them nor forsaken them, but that He loves them and has given them a good hope by grace, notice vs 16 of ch 2. (Read vs 16-17) and Now as he begins to wrap it up we read.

Vs1-5

4 Things that these 5 vs specifically deal with that I want to draw your attention to. Vs 1-2 as we mentioned just a minute ago deal with prayer, which is the 1st key of the 3 I spoke to you of. In Vs 3 Paul impresses upon them God’s “Protection”, His hedge about them that will keep them from the evil one in any way, shape, or form other than that which is divinely permitted. In vs 4 he deals with “perseverance”, their desire to do and *continue* to do, concerning the commands of God’s Word. and Then finally in these 5 vs, in vs 5 he speaks to them of the Love of God and the “Patience” of Christ. So we have *Prayer, protection, perseverance and patience*.

1st of all, “prayer,” Paul says, finally brethren pray for us, I believe that it’s important that we note the fact that Paul was continually seeking to solicit prayer for himself. In Rom 15:30 he said, *“Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me.”* He told the Corinthians that their prayers actually helped God or facilitated God’s deliverance of himself in the midst of despairing despondencies. He exhorted the Eph to be, *“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints -- and for me.”* Eph 6:18-19 To the Col he wrote, *“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us.”* Col 4:2-3, 1 Thess 5:25 *“Brethren, pray for us.”* and Now here we’re reading again, “Finally brethren pray for us”

So many times I believe we fail to pray for church leaders because we’re under this misnomer that they’ve got it made, they’re living on spiritual easy street, but believe me that couldn’t be farther from the truth. I think Satan breaks out the big guns for those in positions of Spiritual authority, he works overtime on them, how many Pastors somehow stumble and fall and it sends ripples throughout the entire congregation, dozens if not hundreds of people being hurt because of the downfall of that one man.

Paul said, pray for me, and this is something we can all do, we might not all be called to be Pastors or missionaries or evangelists, but this is something we can all do, and must do I might add, God help us to be a people of prayer. Why do I bring this up, and make such a point of Paul solicitations for prayer? Because the affectivity of the ministry in no small degree depends upon the prayers of the people of God, and Paul recognized that fact. He could’ve taken the attitude, “Ah, they’re new believers, and jacked up on their theology and understanding of eschatology, how effective can their prayers be?” But he didn’t, instead he took the proper position knowing that there’s power in the prayers of God’s people and so he implored them all, “Pray for us”.

You see too often we seem to think that great preachers make big congregations, but the fact is, great congregations make good preachers, so much of the ministry hinges on the prayers of the people. Prayer is the instrument thru which the preacher is fashioned, maybe you come here and you think, “Man, I really dig the music, and I sure like the people, but I really wish that preacher was a little better at what he does”, let me give you a word of advise, pray for him. J. Vernon McGee said this; “Every work must have prayer behind it if it is to succeed. Every successful evangelist and preacher of the Word, every teacher of the Word who is being used of God, has people who are praying for him.” Paul recognized and realized that the success of his ministry in a profoundly significant measure depended upon the prayers of God’s people and so he said, pray for us. Not for his programs or projects, so often we get side tracked on programs and projects. We feel we need to entertain the goats rather than feed the sheep, but Jesus never said if you love Me, entertain those goats. He said, if you love me, feed my sheep. and So the prayer request that Paul makes (which is actually 2-fold) is that (finish thru vs 2).

He’s not seeking prayer for his programs, or his projects, but for his preaching, for his proclamation of the gospel, and then 2^{ndly} for “preservation”, that he would be delivered from

wicked and unreasonable men. This is the heart of a missionary, that the Word of God wouldn't be hindered in anyway but be able to run it's full course with out restraint. Maybe your bible says, "That the Word of the Lord may have *free course*" but more accurately it's rendered "run" or "run swiftly" as we have it here in the NKJV. The point being that Paul is requesting that they would pray that nothing would hinder the Word of God from taking it's full effect in the hearts of the people, but rather that it be magnified among those whom he shared it with even as it was with them. and I would ask that you would let that be your prayer for me and for this ministry, that the Word of God would be in no way hindered from accomplishing it's full purposes in this place and through this ministry and my life.

Because this brings up an interesting thought, I wonder how often, the work of God's Word is hindered by our sin of prayerlessness? Now we know that God's Word never returns to Him void, but we also know that there's a war going on and that we're not wrestling flesh and blood, but rather principalities, and powers, the rulers of darkness and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. and Jesus taught that as the seed of the Word of God is sown into the hearts of men, that there are those who never really receive it because the birds of the air, the demonic forces reach in and snatch it right out of their hearts before it ever gets a chance to take root.

Yet God has given us the privilege to be pivotal players in the throws of the battle and we need to be on our knees praying that the word of God would run swiftly, unencumbered, accomplishing the purpose for which God sent it and in no way hindered.

What's one way that it's hindered? Well, we mentioned the spiritual hosts of wickedness, but on a more practical level of something very tangible, through unreasonable and wicked men. and Paul said pray for us that we might be preserved in the work of God being delivered from these types of people. Unreasonable people, wicked people who want to stand in the way of what God wants to do, because they love darkness rather than light, they don't want to reason with you concerning the gospel, they want to be left alone to wallow in their sin.

You see the gospel is a very reasonable proposition, "*Come now, and let us reason together,*" Says the LORD, "*Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.*" Isa 1:18 God wants to reason this deal out with man, we're sinners, we're destined for hell, out of His love God gave His only begotten Son so that if we'd just believe in Him, and the work that He did for us on the cross we wouldn't perish, but have everlasting life. Now to me that's a reasonable proposition, I've done nothing for God, He's done everything for me, and He'll give it to me freely with no strings attached if I'll just believe Him for it. But some people are unreasonable, they're wicked, they have no desire to be delivered from their empty and desperate position. But rather they want to stand in the way of what God wants to do, and Paul says just pray that we won't have to deal with these guys, but rather that God would just lead us to those who are ready to respond to the message, because not all have faith.

God will “Protect” your life, He’s faithful, He’ll never leave you, never forsake you, He’s never let you down, and He never will, now *we’re* often times faithless, but God is faithful, and He’ll establish you through the study of His Word and the power of the Holy Spirit in your life and He’ll guard you from the evil one. and Of course this brings Job to mind, who had a protective hedge about him, and Satan couldn’t just have at him however he wanted, whenever he wanted, he had to come to God and seek permission to try his life. and The same is true for you, God’s got your back, He’s watching out for you. and It’s not that you’ll never be persecuted, Jesus said no servant is above His master, and they persecuted Him, and they’ll persecute you, we read in 2 Tim 3:12 *“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”* But God is faithful, and He won’t allow anything to come into your life but that He doesn’t supply the grace for you to bear it or provide a means of escape from it. and We don’t have time today to get into the reasons behind trials and temptations in life, but God will bring about growth, and maturity, and character, and a deeper faith in your life through those times that thrust you on your knees and draw you desperately to His throne. Jesus said, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.”* John 10:27-30 The Lord is Faithful (finish vs 3)

Vs4

Here we see perseverance in view, that not only that they do, but that they will continue to do the things that the Lord would have them do. and Notice the fact that Paul’s confidence wasn’t in them. His confidence was in the *Lord in* them, I don’t expect that you would place any confidence in me, as a matter of fact I would counsel you against that. Because in me, that is in my flesh there’s isn’t any good thing that dwells and you’re only destined for disappointment if you place your confidence in me. But if you place your confidence in the *Lord* concerning me, you’re in a whole new ballgame there. Because the Lord is faithful, and the Lord will never disappoint you if you understand His heart in whatever matter is at hand. You see, if in you’re situation you feel as though the Lord disappointed you, the fact of the matter is, you simply don’t know the heart of the Lord in that situation. Because God is always working things out to His eternal glory, and your eternal good, if that’s not true the word of God is a lie. Because the Word of God says, *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”* Rom 8:28 So Paul’s confidence is in the Lord, working obedience in their lives.

God runs His work on this earth in an orderly fashion. He establishes, elders and deacons, those in spiritual authority for a reason, so that they might be an example to us in godliness and then also instruct us in the way that we should go. and If in a battle you don’t follow the chain of command, or you’re not able to take orders from your commanding officer, you’re going to get killed.

Do you realize how weak, and anemic and useless our military would be if it were run with the same lack of respect, order, obedience and discipline that we often see displayed in the

local church? and Yet even though the armed forces of the United States fights for Justice and freedom, lands, and the rights of mankind, the church is waging war for souls, and people's eternal end. and Yet we're weak, and anemic, we lack order and discipline and obedience, we're to busy backbiting and gossiping, wondering why so and so did such and such, and we become a hindrance to the gospel and to the word of God rather than a help. and So the church becomes non-effective in it's endeavors to wage war, now I thank God that God has committed me to a group of godly people who are eager to do, and to respond to the order that God has established in His Word, but believe me it's not like this everywhere. But with the Thessalonians Paul said, we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, and I'm glad that I can confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you both do, and will do the things that the Word of God commands of you.

Vs5

Maybe your bible says, "Patient waiting for Christ" as to where mine says, "The patience of Christ." I think they both apply, the emphasis either way is on *patience*. Jesus said, "*By your patience possess your souls.*" Luke 21:19 James said, "*Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.*" James 5:7 and I don't know about you, but if you're anything like me, you could use an extra dose of patience, how quick fused we often are, or how easily set off we can be, and then we shoot off at the mouth and say things we often regret when the bible says that we're to, "*be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*" James 1:19-20 Prov 14:29 says, "*He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly.*" Maybe you can relate, Prov 16:32 "*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*" How we need the patience of Christ, and to have our hearts directed into the Love of God, why, Look at 1st Cor Ch 13 (read). Anything we do apart from the love of God being the ultimate motive, or inspiring force in our lives is a wash, how we to be *directed* into, and *abide* in the Love of God.

Vs6-13

So we've talked about "prayer", that being the 1st key of Christian conduct that we outlined for this text, and then through that the "proclaiming" of the gospel, the "protection" of God, the "perseverance" in obedience, and the "patience" of Christ. and Now we come to the "practicalities" of life, how the believer is to conduct himself in one-way that's very practical in the world. and In short, don't be a sponge, get a job, don't walk disorderly, but rather work diligently.

We're talking here about the practical witness both with in the body of Christ, and with out to those who are in the world, and simply put, its God's will for us to work. People often get work confused with the curse, and to a degree, the hardcore labor and all you can go there, but Adam was to tend to the garden, he was to be busy working long before the fall ever took place. God gave him a job, and he expects us to have one as well, especially the men. Women who are married have more room to flex, you're free to stay home and take care of things around the house unless you've sunk yourself so far in debt that you can't survive

otherwise, in which case you should pray that God would help you to use wisdom in your finances to get you caught up. But you men are to be working, 1 Tim 5:8 tells us that, *“If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”* Now I realize that things happen, people get laid off or fired, or any # of situations or circumstances can find us unemployed, but where’s your heart, if it’s to freeload and sponge, then you’re in sin. If it’s to get back in the swing before you become a burden and provide for your family then that’s right on. But the commandment here in the name of the Lord Jesus is for we as believers to with draw from the believer who walks disorderly.

Which is to say that we’re to avoid those who step out of rank, or become slack, refusing (in this case) to work. Why, well because it’s a shallow witness and they can become unnecessarily burdensome and can easily fall into the trap of having too time on their hands that they begin to occupy by sticking their nose into business that doesn’t belong to them. and As Paul points out here, the example of both the scriptures, and that he gave personally was that he provided for himself lest he become a burden to those around him and those to whom he ministered. Notice vs 10 (read). Prov 21:25 *“The desire of the lazy man kills him, For his hands refuse to labor.”* Now we need to be careful to distinguish the man that “will not work” from the man who “cannot work” if a man can’t work that’s different, we’re to tend to the needs of those who can’t tend to themselves. But if a man can work, but simply refuses to, then we’re to with draw from such a person.

Vs11

Don’t miss the play on words there, they’re not working, but they’re *busy*bodies, it’s not that they’re not busy, but they’re busy being in other people’s business. Which is radically disorderly conduct, the Vine’s Expository Dictionary puts this word “busybody” like this, “to waste one’s labor, to be meddling with, or bustling about, other people’s matters.” It goes on, “This may be produced in a free rendering: “some who are not busied in their own business, but are overbusied in that of others.” and If you find yourself with enough time on your hands to get involved in business that’s not your own, so as to begin to nitpick the body of Christ, being a fault finder, or a gossip, described here as a sponging busybody, then you are out of order and need a job. You need to be occupied with your own business, and not be concerned with the business of others, notice vs 12.

Vs12

To work in quietness is the polite way to say, “Mind your own business” and eat your own bread is the polite way to say, “Quit sponging off the church”. Practically speaking we’re to be busy about the things God has called us to, working with our hands, providing for our families, sharing His love and grace until He returns. and We’re to be persistent in doing good, which brings us to our final point.

Vs13

Now sometimes we grow weary “in” the work, but God forbid that we should grow weary “of” the work; we’re to be walking in those good works that God has prepared for us from before the foundations of the world that we should walk in them.

and Not grow weary of doing good, we should be persistent in letting our light so shine that as people see our good works our father in heaven is glorified. In his letter to the Galatians Paul put it like this. *“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”* Gal 6:9-10

Vs14-15

Now this is Paul’s 2nd exhortation not to keep company with those who are disorderly in the body when it comes to refusal to work and provide for his family. But just so that there’s no misunderstanding he tempers his exhortation with the fact that they’re not to be treated like an enemy, it’s not the 1st Cor ch 5 situation. This guy isn’t out fornicating, and being a drunkard trying to tell everyone he’s a believer so that we’re not to even eat with such a one, but they need to know that their lifestyle has them in sin and they need to repent and be made right, they’re to be admonished as a brother.

Vs 16

and Of course it’s that conscious awareness of the Lord’s presence that gives us peace always and in every way and in every situation. Because sometimes our situations aren’t peaceful situations, but the Lord’s presence calms the storms and gives us peace. The 4 gospels show us how with a simple word Jesus can calm the most out of control and raging of storms and bring peace into our lives. and I don’t know what’s going on in every life here today, but let me encourage you to receive the peace of God into your life today, let Him calm whatever storm might be raging out of control in your life.

Vs17-18

So as Paul opens this letter with grace, so he closes it with grace, from A-Z it’s all about the grace of God in the person of Jesus Christ

Maybe you’re here today and you need the peace of God in your life but you don’t know Jesus Christ in personal way. You can’t have the peace of God, until you’ve 1st made peace with God, and we make peace with God through placing our faith in Jesus Christ It’s a reasonable proposition, but we have to receive it, God won’t force Himself upon us. Are you willing to trust in Jesus today, to place your faith in Him for the forgiveness of your sins that you might have everlasting life? God loves you so much, don’t reject His free gift to you, receive it.