

Second Thessalonians 3:1-18

Introduction:

1. *Having spent last week studying the Man of Sin and the falling away, we should crave God's word.*
2. *I hope that knowing the related chapters in advance for Saturday preparation helps your retention.*

Introduction: Paul concludes the second epistle with various exhortations and blessings.

1. Having corrected their errors regarding Christ's coming, he exhorts them to several duties.
2. Paul typically finishes epistles by quickly listing various duties after covering main points.
3. He will appeal to the charge already given to stand fast and hold apostolic tradition (2:15).
4. The defense against falling away and the delusion of satanic lies is sound doctrine and practice.

3:1 Paul seeks their prayers so they will have ministerial success elsewhere as they had there.

1. "Finally" indicates concluding remarks. Christ's second coming was his main theme.
2. Even the apostles needed and sought prayer. If so, how much more mere bishops?
3. Saints should pray for ministers (I Thess 5:25; Heb 13:18; Rom 15:30-32; Eph 6:19).
4. Preaching has free course when neither men nor devils are obstructing or hindering it.
5. Sometimes men may hinder the preaching of Christ's ambassadors (Acts 13:6-8).
6. Men must be given repentance by the grace of God (II Timothy 2:24-26; Acts 11:18).
7. Devils may hinder the preaching of Christ's ambassadors (Acts 16:16-18; I Thess 2:18).
8. Remember that even angels have been hindered by devils (Daniel 10:13,20).
9. Preaching the word had been successfully glorified at Thessalonica (I Thess 2:13).
10. It was still bearing fruit in that church and city by virtue of "as it *is* with you."

3:2 Paul sought deliverance from unreasonable and wicked men without the gift of faith.

1. Paul had asked the Romans for deliverance from unbelievers in Judea (Romans 15:31).
2. A worldview without a Creator God is the sure basis for insanity in life or study.
3. So-called science today is a fraud, for it is only faithless speculation (I Timothy 6:20).
4. Unreasonableness results from not having faith in God – for your premise is wrong.
5. Wickedness results as well from the same false premise – no Creator God or Judge.
6. If faith was a simple response to preaching, why didn't Paul ask prayer *for* them?
7. If preaching can create faith, why didn't Paul want to preach *to* them (Rom 10:17)?
8. Where was his compassion for souls (Rom 9:3; 10:1)? For the elect only (II Tim 2:10)?
9. Perishing men think the gospel foolish (I Cor 1:18); how will you convince them?
10. The god of this world blinds perishing men (II Cor 4:3-4), how will you show them?
11. There is no evidence or methods to convince the unregenerate (Luke 16:31; I Cor 2:14).
12. Faith is the gift of God (II Pet 1:1; Eph 2:8), and God does not give it to every man.
13. All men have the intellectual ability and the revelation of creation so they are without excuse (Rom 1:19-23). But they will not believe God or His word (Ps 10:4; 14:1)!
14. Paul's manner was to seek out those with faith (Acts 17:1-3; 13:14; 16:13; 17:23; etc.).

3:3 Though men may be faithless and dangerous, God is faithful and kind toward His saints.

1. The disjunctive "but" indicates Paul's comfort to them regarding his previous words.
2. The Lord is faithful – He is full of faith and sure to keep His promises (Deut 7:9).
3. The Lord will secure the saints on a solid foundation and protect them from evil.
4. The gift of faith is more than just the beginning principle of it; God will preserve them.
5. He here promises the Lord's support for that which he had prayed for earlier (2:17).
6. The wicked and unreasonable men Paul feared would not seriously harm them either.

3:4 They also trusted the Lord and the Thessalonians to keep the apostolic commandments.

1. They had confidence in the Thessalonians by virtue of the Lord their confidence. Amen!
2. “Touching you” means regarding or concerning you, which was confidence in them.
3. Once we make our reasonable efforts as commanded, we trust the Lord (Ps 127:1-2).
4. They were keeping the commandments, and Paul believed they would continue such.
5. The role and purpose of God’s ministers are not just comfort, but also to command!
6. The ambassadors of the mighty God have commandments for His sons and citizens.

3:5 Paul sought their increase in loving God and waiting for Christ’s return from heaven.

1. We assume the objective-genitive “love” by virtue of the active waiting for Christ and the immediately preceding context of doing “the things which we command you.”
2. Paul sought the Lord to direct their hearts into loving God with greater fervency.
3. We could assume subjective-genitive “love” as in Ephesians 3:14-19, but we don’t here.
4. The Lord can direct our hearts; He does direct our hearts; and we should pray for Him to do so (I Kings 8:57-58; I Chronicles 29:17-19; Psalm 119:36; 51:10; 141:4).
5. We are to work out by and from the work God has done within us (Phil 2:12-13).
6. Loving God is the first and great commandment – it must be a priority for our lives.

3:6 Holding apostolic tradition is of extreme importance and is enforced by church discipline.

1. Disorder in a life or church is not following God’s due order of things (I Chron 15:13).
2. The only times “disorderly” appears in the Bible are all within this chapter (6,7,11).
3. Here is a commandment. It is not a good idea, a zealous prerogative, or an opinion.
4. One of the chief marks of a New Testament church of Jesus Christ is church discipline, which is quickly evident reading the history of the Novationists, Cathari (Puritans), etc.
5. Rome and her daughters, including even infected Baptists, despise and ignore this law; except, of course, when it applies to Bible believers desiring to follow sound doctrine.
6. In these perilous days of powerless religion, church discipline is ignored (II Tim 3:1-5).
7. This commandment is in the name – by the royal authority and order – of Jesus Christ.
8. Opinions of this rule being harsh are twisted – there is a place called hell for sinners!
9. See the lengthy and detailed sermon outline “Church Discipline” dated March 11, 2001.
10. Remember the importance of “due order” in the life of Cain, Moses, Korah, Nadab, Eli, Saul, David, Uzziah, and others. God does not play games with His commandments.
11. Observe that the apostolic *tradition* here is the same as the *traditions* of earlier (2:15).
12. Withdrawing is church discipline, exclusion from the Lord’s Table and social company.
13. God’s order for things is serious, and it extends to what we might consider to be minor.
14. Our treatment of God’s laws either contends with the wicked or praises them (Pr 28:4).
15. Compromise here marks us as heretics, sinners, and not the peculiar, holy saints of God.
16. If the Bible is true, then we want to do all we can for the destruction of the sinful flesh.
17. More specifics of this discipline will be identified before we close the chapter (14-15).
18. This act of corporate judgment follows the private efforts of Gal 6:1-2 and Jas 5:19-20.
19. The “therefore” of 2:15 puts this tradition in a context of Rome’s spiritual adultery.
20. Church discipline is limited by our text to apostolic tradition by the words “of us.”
21. We complain about our nation’s lax penal system, but here we can practice godliness.
22. Men will fuss *for* favorite doctrines and *against* hated heresies, but they often balk here.
23. We have had sermons regarding “Forgotten Sins” to learn what offends our holy God.
24. Corporate action is intended by “ye” (plural) and “yourselves” (plural) executing judgment against the singular “every brother” and “he.”
25. **Every** brother that walks disorderly – even if family, friend, or offence you do not hate.

- 3:7 Paul and fellows had given them an orderly example of apostolic tradition about work.**
1. The principal matter of disorderly conduct in Thessalonica was professional negligence.
 2. But the apostle and the other teachers had given them a sterling example of hard work.
 3. The matter worthy of church judgment here is that of professional slothfulness (3:11).
 4. The ministry is bound to exemplify orderly conduct in their lives (I Tim 4:12; I Pet 5:3).
- 3:8 These ministers had carefully conducted themselves to correct these slothful brethren.**
1. Paul and companions did not eat any man's bread for nothing – they earned it by labor.
 2. They worked night and day – preaching and laboring – to avoid any financial needs.
 3. There were not a financial burden to anyone in Thessalonica, but earned their keep.
 4. Paul had the power to collect from them, but the example was more important to him.
 5. There is no pattern here for ministers or churches to follow in robbing their ministers.
 6. Paul had reminded them of this exemplary conduct in the first epistle (I Thess 2:9).
- 3:9 Though having authority to collect from them, Paul chose to give them a holy example.**
1. As an apostle of Christ, Paul had authority to collect wages from them (I Cor 9:3-7).
 2. Even the Law of Moses taught the same by protecting working oxen (I Cor 9:8-14).
 3. Jesus taught God's rule that the laborer is worthy of his reward (Luke 10:7; I Tim 5:18).
 4. It is perfectly sensible that men working carnally trade for spiritual things (Gal 6:6).
 5. But wise and caring Paul would never let a lesson be lost when needed (I Cor 9:12-17).
- 3:10 Paul had laid down the law when with them that slothful men should be starved.**
1. If you think this is too harsh, then you have a mind twisted by humanistic socialists.
 2. Slothful believers are a shame to Christ's religion. They should be the hardest workers.
 3. If a man will not work, then the just punishment is to let him feel the pains of starvation.
 4. If a man will not work, the fastest way to teach him is to let him starve (Prov 16:26).
 5. Many parents violate this rule every year of life with children: they can learn chores.
 6. Sluggards, those who did not work earlier, should beg and starve in harvest (Pr 20:4).
 7. Christians are only bound to share for real, meaningful, serious, and legitimate needs.
 8. Giving or supporting the slothful, foolish, or negligent is to subsidize sin and folly.
 9. Financial foolishness is deserving of equal judgment by the mind of God (Prov 18:9).
- 3:11 Paul had been told that there were slothful brethren in this church who would not work.**
1. It is not whispering, slandering, or backbiting to tell authorities about sin (I Cor 1:11).
 2. Would you call the police to report a murder? Do your children tell you about theft?
 3. This obvious exception does not modify at all the condemnation of ungodly tattling.
 4. The disorderly conduct of this place is being a busybody rather than working hard.
 5. There were men lying out of work and going house to house with nosey conversation.
 6. Remember, Paul had addressed this sin authoritatively when he was with them (3:10).
 7. He also attacked this error with a gentle approach in the first epistle (I Thess 4:11-12).
- 3:12 God commands His saints to work quietly and diligently and to eat their own bread.**
1. Paul commands and exhorts those whom he has described to get to work quietly.
 2. He again invokes the high authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom He represented.
 3. He had already taught this precept and principle in the first epistle (I Thess 4:11-12).
 4. A great work ethic is not the idea of men or the trait of a race, but the law of God!
 5. Saints should eat their own bread; only acts of God should bring bread from others.
 6. Quietness is contrary to busybodies by keeping a private, personal, sober profession.
 7. Diligence in business is a rule of apostolic order and tradition (Rom 12:11; Eph 4:28).

3:13 Faithful saints should not be discouraged or weary in well doing: they are serving Christ.

1. When the disobedient are rebuked, the obedient may need praise for their faithfulness.
2. Observe the distinction between sinners and the faithful saints Paul makes in verse 11.
3. Though he corrected them for this one area of sin, he encouraged them in other areas.

3:14 Shunning of sinners at the Lord's Table and at social tables is both Scriptural and wise.

1. Paul restates the command of 3:6 in light of Christ's coming and professional diligence.
2. Noting a man is public marking, when sinners are put from the Lord's Table (Ro 16:17).
3. "Any man," "that man," "him," and "he" indicate church action against the individual.
4. He is put from the Lord's Table, and he is avoided at most social tables (I Cor 5:1-11).
5. The purpose is shame, and church discipline has not occurred without creating shame.
6. He is treated as an outsider (Matt 18:15-17); we avoid them (Rom 16:17); we do not keep company with them (I Cor 5:9-11; II Thess 3:14); we do not eat with them (I Cor 5:9-11); we are to withdraw from them (II Thess 3:6); the treatment should shame them (II Thess 3:15); and it must be perceived as and actually be a punishment (II Cor 2:6); and forgiveness, comfort, or love are not given as a church until recovery (II Cor 2:7-8).
7. If a person is repentant, this treatment could swallow a person up with grief (II Cor 2:7).
8. Of course, scornful sinners will be angry, resentful, critical, accusative, offended, etc.
9. It is punishment, and it should not be modified to make it something else (II Cor 2:6).
10. We ignore what they think of our actions the same as wailing children (Proverbs 19:18).
11. See the lengthy and detailed sermon outline "Church Discipline" dated March 11, 2001.
12. The saints that make up a church practice church discipline to enforce holiness for God.
13. This is one of the most contested and questioned aspects of church life due to members with weakness toward family, friends, and feelings, which the Saviour warned against.
14. Here is where decent Christians can choke and forget God's holiness, Christ's zeal, capital punishment under the Old Testament, the purpose of hell, the severity of God's punishments, the importance of details, the Flood, the corrective salt of saints in a society, and other excluded parties unrelated to them.

3:15 The limitations and nature of this shunning are defined by God Himself, not your heart.

1. We have not created a personal enemy – so no personal revenge, despite, or cruelty is allowed; though godly actions may be perceived and falsely accused as such by them.
 - a. If you didn't like the person, then you need to carefully examine your heart.
 - b. If the person wronged you personally, then you need to examine your heart.
 - c. If you can pray for a person, it is a good sign; if you cannot, examine and repent.
 - d. What the excluded person thinks of our treatment doesn't mean the least thing.
 - e. And we don't modify our treatment for any reason outside the Word of God.
2. Absolute shunning for most cases is not right, for it does not match the Scriptures.
 - a. That would be treating them as an *enemy*, which we must not do (Matt 5:43-48).
 - b. That would not be providing the *brotherly* care of *admonition* (Heb 3:12-13).
 - c. For we do not absolutely shun heathen men and publicans (Matthew 18:17).
 - d. And we will be companying with them in assemblies, if they are still attending.
 - e. We must include brotherly admonition – implying care – for his restoration.
 - f. Admonition is not forgiveness or comfort; it is reminding a person of duties.
 - g. It could be right in the case of a scornful rebel where total shunning is possible.
3. Our goal is the salvation of excluded sinners, but we never modify God's ordained means for their salvation by "better ideas," "a gentler approach," or "the love of Jesus."
 - a. There are no human modifications kinder or gentler than these holy commands.

- b. Such foolish talk is the humanistic lie that loving parents do not spank children.
 - c. God declares that withholding chastening is to hate your children (Prov 13:24).
 - d. The fear of God is not taught by kindness; it is taught by terror (II Cor 5:11).
 - e. The end does not justify the means, no matter how many false successes you erroneously think you have seen. Beware of the prosperity of fools (Prov 1:32).
4. There are three factors that affect the treatment we give those excluded from our church.
 - a. Family or other *necessary* relationships must or can be maintained righteously, as long as efforts are still made to shame the offender and admonish them.
 - b. Depending on their repentance, our admonition will obviously vary accordingly: stubborn rebellion will bring warning rebukes and contrition gentle reminders.
 - c. Scorners are devilish fools whom God hates and commands us to avoid, so these wicked persons do not deserve the admonitions of wise men (Prov 9:7-8).
 5. God requires a base minimum – shunning punishment that results in shame. This starts with the Lord’s Table but includes social tables of keeping brotherly company.
 6. God has set a limit or ceiling – hateful cruelty, as the flesh would treat an enemy, is sin.
 7. Where we fall between these limitations set forth by God may vary in a church.
 - a. A father may exercise parental authority to punish a rebellious child far beyond what the church does in church judgment, and he has the just right to do so.
 - b. A child or wife under the authority of a father or husband may only have opportunity to passively make admonitions as opportunities occur.
 - c. If a man has the zeal of Phinehas or Jehu, he will not pander to sentiment at all.
 - d. Every man should remember Eli and Galatians 6:5. He will bear his own burden.

3:16 The blessing of peace is from the Lord of peace. Who can give it by all means always.

1. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee” (Isaiah 26:3-4).
2. The peace here is practical, and God uses all sorts of means to give this precious peace.
3. See the emphasis on peace by “himself,” “Lord,” “give,” “always,” “all,” and “means.”
4. Paul salutes them with the godly blessing used by Boaz to his reapers (Ruth 2:4).
5. Instead of “How ya doin?” we should say to each other, “The Lord be with you.”

3:17 Paul confirms the salutation of his epistles that indicates his authorship.

1. If we understand at least one forged epistle by 2:2, this explanation becomes valuable.
2. Paul did not always write the epistles, but he signed them himself (Romans 16:22).
3. His salutation is **grace!** And there was no apostle more appreciative of God’s grace.
4. We may observe a few peculiarities about his salutation, which will enlighten us.
 - a. It is not at the very end in Romans, but the grace of our Lord is there (Ro 16:24).
 - b. The shortened version is in Colossians, I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus.
 - c. And it is this shortened version that indicates the book of Hebrews as Paul’s.
 - d. Though John closes out the Bible with Paul’s seal, it is still Paul’s constant seal.

3:18 Paul closes this epistle, as all epistles, with a blessing of God’s grace upon the readers.

1. He opened the epistle with God’s grace (1:2), and he closed it with God’s grace. Amen!
2. Without the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are and can do nothing at all! Amen!

Application: The great conflict between Christ’s churches and Satan requires our steadfastness.

1. Contending for apostolic tradition is Scriptural and necessary to counter the falling away.
2. Even our professional lives reflect our Lord and must be maintained free of offence.
3. Church discipline is a mark of Christ’s churches and necessary for apostolic Christianity.