

2 Thessalonians 3

2 Thessalonians 3
Tape #8191
Pastor Chuck Smith

Paul is sort of concluding, now the letter, *Finally, brethren, pray for us,*

It's interesting how Paul was always soliciting prayers of the various churches. Not only did Paul make mention of the fact that he was praying for them. He was remembering them in prayer, day and night without ceasing. God is my witness, he said. How that I longed for you and I prayed for you. But he also solicits their prayers for him.

The Bible says, bear one another's burdens. Pray one for another. So it is important that we pray, especially for those that are in leadership. We thank God for all of the prayers for us. We receive letters from all over the world, people that have somehow been brought into contact with the ministry. And they share how they are praying for us. And surely the success that we see here in the ministry is the direct result of the prayers of God's people all over. What a comfort! What a strength it is to know that people are praying for you!

To the Romans (Romans 15:30), Paul wrote, now I beseech you brethren for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.

To the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 1:11), he wrote, ye also, helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

To the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:18-19), he wrote, praying always with all prayer and supplications in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints and for me. That utterance may be given unto me that I might open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.

To the Colossians (Colossians 4:3), Paul wrote, with all also praying for us that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ for which I also am in bonds.

And one of those short, little exhortations at the end of 1 Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 5:25), Paul just said, brethren, pray for us.

We thank God for the many different prayer groups we have here at Calvary Chapel. The ladies intercessory prayer group on Monday mornings, prayer that goes up.

You know that's one sort of a sad thing, because God has blessed Calvary Chapel so extensively, people come to try to analyze and study what goes on here. And they listen to the music. They listen to the messages. They sort of you know, sit and now if you are here tonight studying, we don't have the Peruvians here every Sunday night. But you know, they will come and maybe some kind of a special service and they think, that's the key! No, the key is prayer and the Word of God. The combination is unbeatable!

So Paul encouraged them, pray for us. What does he want them to pray? *that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:* Pray that we will be able to freely give forth the Word of God. The free course, it talks about an open field to run, just nothing hindering, the track is open. May God give an open track for the Word of God—a free course!

²*And (secondly) that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.* I don't want you to think that I am complaining because I'm not!

I understand that with the fact that God has done so much through the ministry here, that you are bound to have detractors. People will even establish web-sites in order to try to detract people from what God is doing. It's a rather sad thing, but as Paul said, not all men have the faith. There are those who spend their lives in seeking to tear down the faith. When they see God moving in a place in a very special way, they sort of try to center their attacks against it.

So Paul had those that were opposed to him. They were opposed to his teaching. They were declaring that Paul was teaching false doctrine, that Paul did not have a correct view on particular issues. They were always looking for something that they can criticize Paul for, because, they felt, if I can criticize Paul, it sort of raises my level. You see, it makes me the authority, greater than Paul, because I can see the flaws in his

teaching.

There are always those who are looking for some little thing. They listen to the tapes. They study the tapes over and over, listening over and over again, looking for some little thing to jump on.

So Paul says, pray for me, that God will deliver me from these unreasonable men! Those that are seeking to hinder the work that God is doing, that the gospel might have a free course. That it might be able to go out freely, unhindered, by these unreasonable men.

I find that there are many who are constantly trying to draw me into a particular argument. And I'll get letters, faxes, or whatever. And they are trying to get me to get involved in theological kinds of debates and discussions. And I will usually respond once, just sort of solidifying my position, why I believe it's the Scripture basis. But then they will always come back with a long letter challenging all. That's it! I stated my position and that's it! I won't get in a discussion or an argument over it. But yet there are always those unreasonable people who have taken an unreasonable position and they want to argue. They want to promote. They want to—Paul said, pray for me! God will deliver me from unreasonableness. You might pray for me.

There are unreasonable men, but verse three says, ³*But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.* Oh, the faithfulness of God in establishing us! The faithfulness of God in strengthening us and keeping us from evil!

Paul said, ⁴*And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.* Now Paul has given there at the end of the first letter, some twenty-two commands. And he says, now I have confidence in the Lord, that you are going to do these things. And of course these things are really important kinds of things—rejoice ever more! Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks. Quench not the Holy Spirit! Don't despise prophesies. Prove all things. Abstain from all the appearance of evil. He goes on with these things. He says I have confidence in the Lord, concerning you, that you are going to do and you will do these things that I have commanded!

⁵*And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God,* Oh, I love that! May the Lord direct your heart into the love of God! It's interesting how that Satan oftentimes, comes with doubt and questions concerning God's love. Especially when things have gone wrong. Tragedy has come into our lives. It is amazing how that Satan comes along and says, well if God really loves you, why would He allow this to happen to you? He is seeking to cause you to question God's love for you. Satan will sometimes even use saints—saints which ain't. And they will come along and say, well brother, if you only had enough faith. Or there must be something wrong in your relationship with God, you know. And they lay heavy burdens on people. And Paul said, may God direct your heart into the love of God! God does love us! And God is working in the circumstances in our lives, a good purpose—that I know.

So may God direct your hearts into the love of God *and into the patient waiting for Christ.* This is something that I have discovered, that if you wait long enough, God will work it out. You know it is amazing the things that God will work out if you just wait!

Our impatience so often gets in the way of the work of God. Sometimes because we get involved, and we are determined that we are going to see this thing corrected and all, and we get involved in it, it just sort of hinders the work that God is doing or is wanting to do. And so Paul is praying that the Lord will direct their hearts. Not only into His love but into the patient waiting. Wait on the Lord! How many times does God tell us, over and over again, wait on the Lord! And yet how many times, we find it difficult to wait on the Lord. We start to do things ourselves. Throughout the Bible, we have interesting illustrations of people, who have sought to help God out and the trouble that came from it! We know generally what God's purpose and will is, and somehow we have the foolish notion that God can't do it without my help.

Abraham knew that God wanted to give him a son. God had promised Abraham a son. And he knew that that's what God wanted to do for him. But after waiting a while and no son was forthcoming, Sarah finally said, Abraham, you take my handmaid, Hagar and impregnate her. Let her become a surrogate mother. And when the child is born, I will receive him on my lap. I will nurse him. And I will be as a mother to him. Let's help God out, Abraham. I don't think I can get pregnant. So, let's help God out. They are still to the present day, the nation of Israel, to the present day, is having difficulties because Sarah and Abraham tried to

help God out. Because the Arab nations are descendants from Ishmael, the child that was born from Hagar the Egyptian. You know, you can just load on to yourselves, a peck of trouble when you try to help God out.

There was Jacob. Surely it was God's desire that Jacob the birthright and the blessing. Before they were ever born, God according to His foreknowledge, knowing what these boys would do, the predisposition that they would have, chose Jacob over Esau. Though they were twins, Esau was born first. And there was conflict between these brothers. And so the time came for the blessing, truly it is God's will that Jacob received the blessing. So Rachel said, son, you go in. Your father is blind. He can't see. And you pretend you're the brother, Esau. I'll help you disguise yourself. Rather than patiently waiting for God to do it, his deception cost him seventeen years in a foreign land. And it cost him not ever seeing his mother alive again. It's sad, the things that happen when we try to help God out. So may God direct your hearts in His love and in the patient waiting for Christ.

⁶Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, And so this is putting really some teeth to the command.

We command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.* Now, because Paul does mention here the tradition that they received from him. In the previous chapter, verse fifteen, he said, therefore brethren, stand fast, hold to the tradition which you have been taught, whether by word or our epistle.

The apologists within Catholic Church because the word, tradition, appears here, use this as an argument for the accepting of the traditions of the Church as valid and the dogmas of the church for doctrine because they have become traditions. And if anything is practiced long enough that it becomes a tradition, then they accept it as Biblical proof, though it isn't Biblical proof. It's just tradition that has woven into the worship cycle or into the belief system. And of course the latest tradition that they are trying to incorporate into church dogma, is the co-redemptive work of Mary, that she is the co-redemptress with Jesus Christ and that you can only be saved by coming through Mary unto Jesus. That has been tradition and it has been requested that the Pope make it a church dogma so that it will be accepted generally within the church. And they use the fact that Paul speaks of traditions here.

But notice Paul is speaking of traditions or the teaching that I have given to you, which have been taught whether by Word or by the letters that I have written. It's not extra-Biblical tradition. And in this commandment he is telling them to withdraw from those brothers that walk disorderly, not according to the tradition that you received from us.

In the context he is talking about certain people in Thessalonica, who have picked up the doctrine of the rapture of the church and the coming again of Jesus Christ and have begun to sort of say, well, the Lord is coming so soon, let's quit our jobs. Let's sell everything we have and just wait for the Lord to come. We don't need to work. Let's just kick back. If the Lord is coming soon, why worry about the future.

Unfortunately, this seems to be a cyclical thing. A sickly thing too, but cyclical, it comes around. And you remember some fellow by the name of Weizenut, who turned out to be more of a nut than wise. He wrote a book back in 1988, Eighty-Eight reasons why Jesus Christ is coming in '88. He had a lot of people of excited. They thought the Lord was coming during the Feast of Tabernacles in 1988.

Then some young Korean evangelist set another date. He had everybody sell their properties and give him the money. I think he is in jail now. I know he was charged.

Some fellow came up to me this morning and said, you know, I was at a place the other day. They were saying that Jesus is coming in 1998. They had set a date. They said that no man knows the date nor the hour, we don't know the exact hour that He is coming, but it's in September of 1998. What do you think about that? I said, I think about that what I think about all of the other predictions—rot! But this is something that has been going on for a long time.

Back in 1657, I think it was, the Millerites all sold their farms back in the east. They gathered and put on white sheets and sat on the roof of the house because they figured out the day that Jesus was coming. Now I don't know why they sat on the roof. Maybe they would have been a little closer to heaven, but you know, they could have gone to a mountain top. And why would they have to put on white sheets? You see, when

you really look at these things, there are irrational parts to them. The people get caught up in a fervor. And so Paul is warning about that. Don't get caught up with it. Withdraw yourselves from those brothers who walk disorderly, not after the traditions you received from us.

⁷*For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us:* Paul said, be followers of me, even as I also am of Jesus Christ.

for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Now when Paul is saying, follow us, he is saying follow the example that I set. When I was with you, I earned my own way. I didn't mooch off of any of you, but I labored. I made my own way among you. And that's is what he is saying, follow us, not to be disorderly, not to stand on the corner with a sign, will work for money. But work! Get a job! Support yourself!

⁸*Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:* So follow us, the example that we set. We worked to provide for our needs. So should everyone who is able, work to provide for their needs.

Now, if you are not able, that is another story. And there should be from the church, a willingness to help those who are unable to provide for themselves. But if a person is able then he should be providing form himself and not trying to live off of others.

Paul said, he travailed night and day in order that he would not be chargeable to any of them. Now, this was Paul's pattern when first taking the gospel. He would not receive support from people that he was sharing the gospel with.

This is what I love about the Good Friday night outreach this week, where we are seeking to bring the gospel to people—the Good Friday service, the sunrise service. We are not taking any offerings. I know that a lot of TV evangelists are thinking we are absolutely crazy. You get a crowd that big? Man! You could really work them for a huge offering, you know. But I love not taking offerings. When you are out bringing the gospel message to the world, I love to offer the gospel freely without even taking an offering. It's in my heart.

Now, once the churches were established, then Paul did accept support from them, once they were established, but never in going to a community to establish a work, would he take money from them. It was only after the work was established. When he went into Corinth, he talked about how that he had made tents in order not to be chargeable to any of them. But later on, he wrote to the Corinthians when he was wanting to collect money for the church in Jerusalem, not for himself, but for the church in Jerusalem. And he said let every man as he has purposed in his own heart, lay up on the first day of the week, for the poor brethren in Jerusalem. I want you to do it in advance before I get there, because I don't want any collections taken while I am there. But every man should give not out of constraint or pressure, for God loves a cheerful giver, so as he has purposed in his own heart. Some people often ask about New Testament giving, tithing and so forth. The rule is, let every man as he has purposed in his heart, so let him give.

Now, I can tell you that you can't outgive God! I think a tithe is a good starting point, but that's just me. I don't think it's the end. I think that's just a good starting point.

I'm trying to think, I heard a story of some kid who was calling what he thought was the record store. He was wanting a popular record at the time. He was down in Texas. He happened to get the plumber's house, rather than the record store. And he asked, do you have that record, Twelve Kids on the Roof? And the plumber said, no, I have ten kids though, in the house. And he said, is that a record? He said, no, but it's a good average!

As you purpose in your heart, so give. We didn't eat any man's bread for nothing, we labored with our own hands, travelling night and day.

⁹*Not because we have not power,* As an apostle, it was proper that he should be supported. When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he said to them that they should provide in all good things to those who taught them the Word. That they should take care of it. It is written, you shall not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn. But Paul himself never wanted people to think that he was in it for the money. And he took careful pain to make sure that he was not a burden to anybody, but that he paid and made his own way.

Not that we didn't have the power, *but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.* ¹⁰*For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, Now notice it was not "could not". If any man would not work, if you are able to and you don't work, neither should he eat. If he comes over to your house at dinner time, just say, well you sit here in the living room while the family eats our meal. I'll talk to you later, you know. If they will not work, it really isn't up to the church to support them.*

¹¹*For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. They just go around meddling in other people's affairs. They just go around as busy bodies and they don't work at all.*

¹²*Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.* Let them shut up, get a job and provide for their own needs.

And then he said, ¹³*But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.* Writing to the Galatians, Paul said, be not weary and well doing, but he added in his letter to the Galatians (Galatians 6:9), for in due season, you will reap if you faint not. Sometimes people do get weary in well-doing. They get weary because they don't see the immediate fruit of their labor. They don't have immediate results. They become weary in doing the right thing. But Paul said, don't be weary in doing the right thing. In due season, you will reap, if you faint not.

¹⁴*And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note (or mark) that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.* Paul was really serious about this business that a person should work and provide for his own needs and not try to live off of others.

¹⁵*Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.* Go to him. Say to him, man, you need to get a job. You know, you are just sponging off of other people. Now get a job! Go to work! There are jobs out there and you may not, you know, immediately get the kind of job you want because you want to be the president of the company, but you know, you've got to start somewhere. Get a job as a janitor. Work your way up. But admonish them.

And Paul's closing benediction, ¹⁶*Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.* The Lord of peace—to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 1:3), he said, the God of all comfort, comfort you. Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means.

The Lord be with you all.

¹⁷*The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.* In every epistle that I write, I sign it with my own hands. Not there were letters that came to the church in Thessalonica that purported to be from Paul. Some of the false teachers wrote letters to them, that purported to be from Paul. So Paul is saying, hey, this is my trademark. I sign all of my letters with my own hand. In order if a letter comes and it is purportedly sent by Paul, if it doesn't have Paul's signature, it didn't come from Paul. And because there were a lot of letters being circulated. I means these guys were very devious, false teachers usually are very devious.

One of these web sites that is constantly attacking Calvary Chapel, says "Calvary Chapel Website". Devious! False prophets, false teachers are extremely devious. And they were writing these letters, purporting to be from Paul, so Paul says, you know, signing it. I do all of my letters. I sign my letters. Now Paul had others write the letters. He had secretaries. Timothy would write some of the letters. Different ones would write the letters for Paul, but he would always sign them. That was a mark of authenticity. The salutation of Paul with my own hands, which is the token in every epistle, so I write.

¹⁸*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* He starts the epistles by wishing them grace and peace. He ends the epistle to the Thessalonians with that same wish, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Next week we start First Timothy, this exciting letter of Paul's to his young son in the faith. It is filled with instruction, especially for anybody who is interested in serving the Lord. Paul gives to Timothy, just a lot of practical instructions concerning serving the Lord. So next week read the first chapter of Timothy and be prepared to continue with us as we journey through the Bible.