

## 2 Thessalonians 3:3-5

### Importance for Prayer

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### **Introduction**

Verses 1-5 provide insight into Paul's heart regarding what he wanted from the people he shepherded. These are true of what any devoted pastor desires from his people.

The apostle set forth four fundamental desires he had of the Thessalonians: that they would pray for him, that they would trust the Lord, that they would obey his divinely revealed teaching, and that they would grow spiritually.

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## 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it is* with you, <sup>2</sup> and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. <sup>3</sup> But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the evil one. <sup>4</sup> And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. <sup>5</sup> Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

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## A Pastor's Desire: Trust in the Lord

2 Thessalonians 3:3

**But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the evil one.**

Paul wrote this letter from Corinth. He did not know firsthand how strong the Thessalonians' faith and walk with God was in the midst of persecution.

However, Paul knew **the Lord** would be **faithful** to accomplish His purposes for them.

**The Lord is faithful!** As believers trust in His spiritual provisions, they will always be able to handle assaults from the world's evil system: "God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*" (1 Cor. 10:13).

Scripture is filled with affirmations of the Lord's faithfulness (e.g., Deut. 7:9; Ps. 36:5; 40:10; 89:1–2, 8, 24, 33; 92:2; 119:75, 90; Isa. 49:7; Lam. 3:23; 1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Thess. 5:24; Heb. 10:23; 1 Peter 4:19; 1 John 1:9).

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But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

Paul went on to tell the Thessalonians how God would express His faithfulness to them. Establish you and guard you are synonymous with “**strengthen and protect.**” God will firmly establish believers on the inside and guard them on the outside from the evil one. This is most likely a reference to Satan and his followers (Matt. 13:19, 38; John 17:15; 1 John 2:13–14; 3:12; 5:18–19). The Lord gives His children internal spiritual strength (2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16) while He shields them from external attacks (Eph. 6:16). Jude states “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24).

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## A Pastor's Desire: Obedience to Truth

2 Thessalonians 3:4

And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.

The third pastoral desire Paul had for the Thessalonians was that they continue their pattern of obedience to God. Based on what they were already **doing** (1 Thess. 1:3, 6–8; 3:12–13; 4:1), Paul had confidence in the Lord that they would will do the things he taught them. As their pastor, he had spent much time explaining the Word of God, and in so doing he had the authority to command that they obey it (1 Tim. 4:11).

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Scripture is replete with such commands for obedience. In fact, David described the entirety of God's Word as a command: "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Ps. 19:8). In the Great Commission, Jesus defined as commands the many things He taught, and He expected believers to obey them: "Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Even the gospel contains the twofold command to repent and believe (Mark 1:15; cf. 6:12; Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:20). Therefore, it is the duty of all believers, as it was for the church at Thessalonica, to obediently follow the divine commands that were given them.

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## A Pastor's Desire: Grow Spiritually

2 Thessalonians 3:5

Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

Paul also desired that the Thessalonians continue in their spiritual growth, so he asked that the Lord direct their hearts toward that objective. Direct, means to "make straight," is the same word used in 1 Thessalonians 3:11 to indicate the removing of all obstacles and hindrances so he could return to them. Paul did not want their spiritual progress to come to a halt, but rather that the Lord would clear the way so their hearts or inner persons would move into the love of God.

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The phrase **of God** in the Greek carries a double meaning. It can refer to the believer moving deeper into God's love, or it speak of moving deeper into a love for God. Both are true and most commentators believe that intentionally chose this wording to reflect both aspects. Paul desired that his readers would go down the pathway deeper and deeper into God's love for them, which in turn would cause them to love Him more and more.

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Second, Paul desired that God would **direct** the Thessalonians' **hearts** to grow stronger into the patience of Christ. The word "patience" can also be translated as steadfastness and has the idea of patiently enduring. The phrase into the patience of Christ, also contains a certain degree of ambiguity in meaning. The phrase can refer to Christ's **steadfastness** with believers, as He hold the believer safe withing His hands. It can also refer to the believers' patience in Christ's strength, through their endurance.

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## **A Pastor's Desire: Grow Spiritually**

2 Thessalonians 3:5

Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

There is a cycle of behavior (Romans 5:1-5). We are going to face problems in this life. We can depend on ourselves which does not work out well, or we can rest in Christ and His provisions. As we depend on Jesus, we learn by experience His faithfulness which in turn causes us to depend on Him more and more. As we learn the faithfulness of His character, He changes our character, and we love Him more and more.

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## **So What ...**

The duty of all believers is to invest themselves in the lives of others, both saved and unsaved. We are to build up one another. Like Paul's desire for the church, we can have this same for others.

We can pray that:

- That they would trust the Lord more and more,
- That they would be obedient to the teachings of God's Word,
- And that they would grow spiritually into a deeper relationship with Jesus!

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