

2 Thessalonians 3

3 *As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. ² And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith.*

Paul touches on some things that are really worth noting. PRAY FOR US. He asks that the message of the gospel will be "spread rapidly", and then he says pray for us to be delivered from wicked and evil people.

Paul was a powerful person. We became aware of that when we went and visited Greece. He was unbelievable. But he asked for prayer because he knew how weak and helpless he really was. I'm trying to start praying for this body more. Larry and I went out on Sunday afternoon and went to the homes of some to minister to them. It culminated in laying hands on one of our own and anointing her with oil. We ALL need prayer.

You know, we need more prayer at Union Grove. When someone asks you to pray about something, why don't you just take their hand and pray for them right there and then. That's how we can have a direct impact in the lives of our brothers and sisters in the body.

Have you heard people say, "Well, I guess all we can do is pray!" Prayer is NOT our last result. Larry and I experienced this recently when we were praying for help with the sound board. We admitted to each other that we really had not paid for our needs. None of us like getting put into a position where we have to depend totally on God. Why? Because it is a control issue. We just can't get ourselves out of the way because we think we're more dependable than God. Paul wasn't that way.

There are times when ALL OF OUR SUPPORT system is removed out from under us. He says, "Will you put your hope fully in me?" And, God does this graciously. He knows our needs and He wants to fill them, but He just wants us to depend on Him and ask it of Him. When I first married Sandy we were speaking about prayer and I remember her telling me, "It is when we get to the end of ourselves that we can see God at work in our lives."

Jesus talks about this heart attitude at the start of the Beatitudes when He says, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit for they shall see God." When we really begin to realize just how broke and needy we are, we can see God at work. That's actually a very comforting thought. So we might as well realize right now how needy we are.

³ But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. ⁴ We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. ⁵ May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

Paul then goes on to assure that the Lord is faithful and he will both strengthen us and protect us from the evil one. I can tell you experience after experience where God has been faithful in my life. Sometimes I go to bed at night praying for the Lord to take care of things in my life. I pray that He will bend hearts to Himself. He is faithful. He is going to strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. When we call on Him, Satan CANNOT win. We are not in a struggle between two equal forces: one of good and one of evil. It is the Lord God Almighty that is the maker and controller of the universe.

You can have confidence that God is able.

Then Paul focuses on idleness. That is a Greek word meaning "disorderly". He'll tell us here what that means. Learn to pick them out and learn to stay away from them.

Warning Against Idleness

⁶ In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching^(a) you received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. ⁹ We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."

In the early church in Jerusalem there was a lot of communal living. Here's how a commune works: You'd sell your property. You'd bring your income. You'd bring all that you had and you'd chip in. Guess what? It didn't work very well. Remember when Ananias and Saphira lied about their contribution?

We studied together how there were widows who were not getting their daily portion, so we had the establishment of deacons.

What other problem can you imagine happening? LAZY PEOPLE Folks see others pulling the wagon and they jump in the wagon. So Paul says, "If a man aWON'T work, neither shall he eat." Notice that it doesn't say, "If a man CAN'T work he won't eat." They had a real issue with people being idle. They weren't doing anything so they were getting into everyone else's business.

11 We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.

Paul is just saying that everyone should work a good day's work and get after it. When people don't work they don't feel good about themselves and they lean on others. When Sandy and I were

14 Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. 15 Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer.

Paul tells us to take note of such people that are loafers. And he tells us to not "associate with them" so they will feel ashamed. He's telling us that if someone is in direct opposition to God's will, then we should shame them. We're told today that shaming is not right. But, there can be the use of shame by the HOLY SPIRIT to bring some sometimes to repentance.

We always think, who are we to judge. But if we see someone willfully living a life of rebellion, we don't have to accept them. We aren't suppose to be arrogant or a holier-than-thou attitude, but sometimes we have to withdraw from others and their imorality. We do this so that they might understand that there are consequences to sin.

We live in a world that doesn't like the word "consequences". But consequence are what we feel because of our actions. Sin separates. Sin separates us from God and it separates us from others. It breaks sweet fellowship. This should be done with great care.

Don't treat them like an enemy. It should break your heart to have to respond to a brother that way.

Final Greetings

16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. 17 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

He ends the letter bringing attention to the way he wrote. He must have had an eye problem because he speaks at the end of the Book of Galatians telling them that he was writing in "Large letters".