

“The Lord is Faithful”
2 Thessalonians 3:3-5
(Preached at Trinity, September 13, 2020)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Paul opens **Chapter 3** with a charge to the Thessalonians—a charge for them to pray for him. It was a selfless request. As always Paul's focus was upon the ministry. His focus was upon the success of the Gospel—that it would spread quickly and be glorified.
2. He taught his fellow believers to keep their focus on things above, upon Kingdom matters. But Paul demonstrated his teaching with his own life. Paul was always willing for others to examine his life. He never told others to do that which he wasn't willing to do himself.
2 Thessalonians 3:7 NAU - "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example"
Philippians 3:17 NAU - "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us."
Paul charged Timothy to make this the pattern of his own pastoral ministry:
1 Timothy 4:12 NAU - "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."
3. He asked for prayer that he might be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. Again, it wasn't for his own comfort, but that the Gospel would go forth unhindered and spread rapidly.
4. One of the hindrances was the resistance and opposition of unbelievers. They take many forms. I quoted F.F. Bruce last week:
“The reference here is not restricted to Jews or Gentiles, to those in authority or the ‘rascal multitude’; it applies to all whose policy or activity hindered the spread of the saving message and worked to the detriment of the messengers.”¹
5. One group particularly harmful to the Gospel are those within the church who have professed Christ with their lips but their hearts are far from Him.
Isaiah 29:13 KJV - "Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me"
6. These are troubling words. What about me? Am I being faithful to the advancement of the Gospel, or do I hinder the spread of the Gospel?
With the heart of a pastor, Paul turned his attention to comforting his readers—
“But the Lord is faithful”
These are some of the most comforting words in all of Scripture.
They follow Paul's description of those who hinder the Gospel's progress. It is due to perverse and evil men, those void of faith. What does this mean for the faithful?
We are reminded that God is faithful even when it seems evil is prevailing.

¹ F.F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol.45, 1&2 Thessalonians*, (Waco: Word Books, Publisher, 1982), P.198.

7. This passage reminds us of at least four ways God displays His faithfulness. God is faithful in His promises, in His provision, in His protection, in His preserving
- I. God is faithful in His promises
- A. Paul is seeking prayer for Gospel success
1. Evil men are always present to hinder the progress of the Gospel
Paul is seeking rescue from their attacks
 2. Paul adds, "for not all have faith"
 3. It would seem that the progress of the Gospel is in peril. Is it possible that the Gospel could be stopped and rendered a failure?
The answer is NO! God is faithful to promises.
- B. The Gospel will not ultimately be hindered from accomplishing its mission
1. God's promises are sure. Peter describes it:
2 Peter 3:9 NAU - "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."
a. "toward you" is referring to those who are partakers of God's promises.
2 Peter 1:3-4 NAU - "seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."
b. God is not willing to lose a single one of His elect.
 2. Unbelief cannot diminish God's faithfulness in fulfilling His purpose. Paul described the unbelief of the Jews in Romans 3
Romans 3:1-4 NAU - "Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? ² Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? ⁴ May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar"
 3. The Gospel goes forth as a powerful unstoppable force. It is the power of God unto salvation.
Paul seeks their prayers that the Word of the Lord will spread rapidly. He is asking them to pray for what God has promised to do.
Isaiah writes:
Isaiah 55:11 NAU - "So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it."

II. God is faithful in His provision - "He will strengthen you"

A. Paul speaks of wicked and faithless men

1. It is a fearful thought. Some have found their way into the church
2. Their presence can weaken and discourage the brethren.
3. How is it we encourage one another? How is it God protects us from hindering the Gospel?

B. Paul says, don't fear – God will strengthen you

1. This is the promise of the Gospel – it transforms lives.
2. Saving faith grows and increases. The Thessalonians were testimony to this.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 NAU - "We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention *of you* in our prayers; ³ constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,"

2 Thessalonians 1:3 NAU - "We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever greater*;"

3. God demonstrates His faithfulness in continually strengthening us
Ephesians 3:14-16 NAU - "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,"

Colossians 1:9-12 NAU - "For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light."

III. God is faithful in His protection

A. Paul is describing the danger of faithless men – the unbelievers of this world

1. We are greatly outnumbered. The Body of Christ is referred to as a remnant. Jesus said there are many on the road to hell compared to few who are on the road to life.
2. We also know that they are most dangerous because they are being manipulated and blinded by Satan.

3. When Paul described the Christian warfare he said our ultimate enemy is not man but Satan.
Ephesians 6:11-12 NAU - "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."

- B. Paul assured these struggling Thessalonian believers that God will be faithful to protect them from the evil one.
 1. The text literally reads, "protect you from evil." It could refer to evil of all sorts, but the masculine adjective most likely refers to particular source of evil – "the evil one." This is the same grammatical construction as Jesus used in the Lord's Prayer – "Deliver us from the evil one"
 2. God is faithful to protect us from the attacks of Satan.
The word φυλάσσω refers to the work of a guard or watchman
Acts 28:16 NAU - "When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him."
 3. God has given us the tools for warfare
 - a. A strong shield – the shield of faith. This is the faith that God strengthens and increases.
 - b. A powerful two-edged sword that Satan cannot resist
 - c. God has promised us that as we resist this foe he will flee from us
James 4:7 NAU - "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."
 4. While Satan is relentless in his attacks upon the church and the work of the Gospel he will not prevail. God has promised to protect us.

IV. God is faithful in His preserving

2 Thessalonians 3:4 NAU - "We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will *continue to do* what we command."

2 Thessalonians 3:5 NAU - "May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ."

- A. Paul is warning of those who do not have faith – those in unbelief
 1. If some even in the church are still in unbelief who is safe?
Jesus gave solemn words to the religious leaders of His day
Matthew 7:15-23 KJV - "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. ¹⁶ Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? ¹⁷ Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. ²⁰ Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. ²¹ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
 2. God keeps His own. He will not lose one.

- B. Paul comforts them – “we have confidence in the Lord concerning you”
1. Notice the words, “in the Lord” – they were united to Christ
 2. God keeps us, preserves us, and equips us
 - a. They were pressing on in obedience – Paul commends them, “you are doing what we command.” What was the content of Paul’s commands?
 - b. Paul was following the Great Commission.
Matthew 28:18-20 NAU - "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
 3. God sustains us and enables us to press on in obedience. It is God’s work. Notice Paul’s words in **Verse 5** –
 “May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.”
 “and into the steadfastness of Christ”
 The word for “steadfastness” is ὑπομονή - it refers to endurance, perseverance. God is faithful to preserve us.
1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 NAU - "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass."

Conclusion:

1. The faithfulness of God is a constant source of comfort to us, particularly during times of affliction. Even when suffering God’s chastisement, we are comforted by the faithfulness of His mercies.
Lamentations 3:19-24 KJV - "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. ²⁰ My soul hath *them* still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. ²¹ This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. ²² *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.* ²³ *They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.* ²⁴ The LORD *is* my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him."
2. The Thessalonians were suffering greatly because of their faith in Christ. But God was faithful to His promises, faithful in His provision, in His protection, in His preserving God would preserve them faithful until the end and strengthen them to every good work. And He is continuing this work in us.