

The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians



And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God,
and into the patient waiting for Christ.

— 2 Thessalonians 3:5

Introduction to the Study



Second Thessalonians chapter 3 brings the letter to a practical conclusion. After correcting confusion about the Day of the Lord, the falling away, the man of sin, and the restraint that remains until God's appointed time, Paul turns the church toward prayer, steadfast obedience, orderly conduct, faithful labor, brotherly correction, and peace.

This chapter is not a retreat from prophecy. It is the proper response to prophecy. The church that understands the coming of the Lord should not become idle, fearful, or disorderly. Instead, believers are called to pray that the word of the Lord would have free course, trust the faithfulness of the Lord, walk according to apostolic instruction, work quietly, continue in well doing, and receive the peace and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

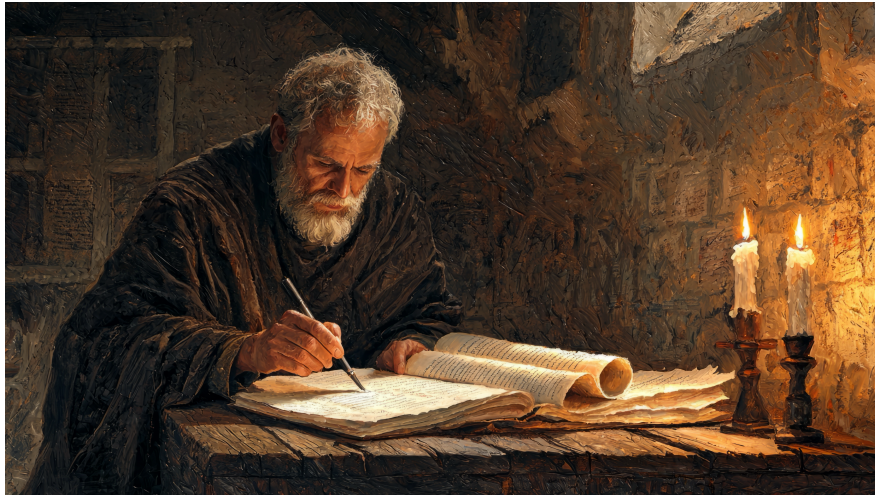
Chapter 2 warned the church not to be deceived. Chapter 3 shows what steadiness looks like in daily life: prayerful mission, confidence in the Lord, disciplined obedience, responsibility within the body, and brotherly admonition without hatred.

Study Focus

- † Prayer for the word of the Lord to have free course and be glorified.
- † Deliverance from unreasonable and wicked men.
- † The Lord's faithfulness to establish His people and keep them from evil.
- † The Lord directing hearts into the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ.
- † Apostolic instruction concerning disorderly conduct.
- † The biblical balance between compassion, responsibility, work, and discipline.
- † Brotherly admonition that corrects without treating the offender as an enemy.
- † The closing peace and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Structure of 2 Thessalonians 3:1–18

Prayer, confidence, direction, admonition, order, peace, and grace.



Letter	Section	Verses	Description
A1	Prayer for Paul and the Word	3:1–2	Pray that the word of the Lord may have free course and that Paul may be delivered from wicked men.
B1	Confidence in the Lord	3:3–4	The Lord is faithful to stablish and keep His people, and Paul has confidence in their obedience.
C1	Direction of the Heart	3:5	The Lord directs hearts into the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ.
D1	Admonition	3:6–15	Orderly conduct, apostolic example, quiet work, and brotherly correction.
E1	Charge to the Orderly	3:6	Withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not after the apostolic tradition.
F1	Example of Paul and the Brethren	3:7–9	Paul labored and refused to be chargeable, giving an example to follow.
G1	Charge to the Non-Worker	3:10	If any would not work, neither should he eat.
G2	Instance of Disorder	3:11	Some were working not at all, but becoming busybodies.
F2	Charge to the Disorderly	3:12–13	Work with quietness, eat your own bread, and do not grow weary in well doing.
E2	The Disobedient Admonished	3:14–15	Note the disobedient brother, yet admonish him as a brother, not an enemy.
A2	Conclusion: Peace and Grace	3:16–18	The Lord of peace gives peace, and the grace of Christ closes the letter.

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us,

† that the word of the Lord may have free course,

† and be glorified,

† even as it is with you:

2 And that we may be delivered

† from unreasonable and wicked men:

† for all men have not faith.

3 But the Lord is faithful,

† who shall stablish you,

† and keep you from evil.

4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you,

† that ye both do

† and will do

† the things which we command you.

5 And the Lord direct your hearts

† into the love of God,

† and into the patient waiting for Christ.

6 Now we command you, brethren,

† 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.

7 For yourselves know

† how ye ought to follow us:
† for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

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:

9 Not because we have not 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,
† neither should he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some

† which walk among you disorderly,
† working not at all,
† but are busybodies.

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.

13 But ye, brethren,

† be not weary in well doing.

14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle,

† note that man,

† and have no company with him,

† that he may be ashamed.

15 Yet count him not as an enemy,

† but admonish him as a brother.

16 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.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

† be with you all.

† Amen.

Companion Bible Footnote Helps

The following notes are summarized as study helps from the Companion Bible footnotes and structure. They are included to help the class track key words in the passage without losing the flow of Paul's argument.

Verse	Word / Phrase	Study Note
3:1	Finally	The phrase moves the reader into the remaining matters of the letter, especially prayer, obedience, order, and peace.
3:1	pray for us	Paul asks the church to participate in the ministry through prayer. The apostle is not above needing intercession.
3:1	free course	The expression carries the idea of the word running. Paul desires the word of the Lord to move swiftly and unhindered.
3:1	be glorified	The word is glorified when it is received, believed, obeyed, and honored as the word of God.
3:2	unreasonable and wicked men	The opposition is not merely intellectual disagreement. Paul speaks of men who are out of place, perverse, and morally opposed to the truth.
3:2	all men have not faith	Not all who hear religious words possess faith. The church must not be naive about opposition.
3:3	the Lord is faithful	Paul contrasts unfaithful men with the faithful Lord. Human opposition does not cancel divine faithfulness.
3:3	stablish / keep	The Lord strengthens His people and guards them from evil while they continue in obedience.
3:5	direct your hearts	The Lord makes the heart straight toward His love and toward patient endurance connected with Christ.
3:6	withdraw yourselves	The command concerns separation from disorderly conduct within the brotherhood, not hatred or cruelty toward a brother.
3:6	disorderly	The word pictures conduct out of rank or out of order. Paul applies it to those refusing the apostolic pattern.
3:6	tradition	Apostolic teaching and practice received from Paul and his companions. The church is to hold what was delivered.
3:7–9	ensample	Paul's labor among them was an example to follow. He had the right to support, but chose to model responsibility.
3:10	would not work	The issue is refusal, not inability. Paul addresses willing idleness, not weakness, poverty, age, illness, or genuine need.
3:11	busybodies	Idleness often produces meddling. Those who refuse proper work may become improperly occupied in the affairs of others.
3:13	well doing	The faithful are not to become exhausted or discouraged in doing what is right because others are disorderly.
3:14–15	admonish him as a brother	Correction remains brotherly. The goal is shame leading to restoration, not rejection as an enemy.
3:16–18	peace and grace	The letter closes with the Lord of peace and the grace of Christ, holding together order, comfort, and fellowship.

Biblical Observations

Observation 1

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us,

† that the word of the Lord may have free course,

† and be glorified,

† even as it is with you:

2 And that we may be delivered

† from unreasonable and wicked men:

† for all men have not faith.

- pray for us... Paul begins the final chapter by asking for prayer. This is significant because Paul has just taught about deception, lawlessness, and the coming of the Lord. His next move is not speculation, but mission. The church is called to pray that the word of the Lord would continue to move forward.

- free course... The idea is that the word would run. The gospel is not to be chained, stalled, or slowed by opposition. Paul desires that the word move swiftly, openly, and effectively, just as it had among the Thessalonians.

- be glorified... The word is glorified when it is received as the word of God, believed, obeyed, and allowed to produce fruit. The aim is not merely that people hear preaching, but that God's message is honored by faith and obedience.

- unreasonable and wicked men... Paul is realistic. Gospel ministry faces opposition from those who are morally disordered and hostile to the truth. Yet opposition is not the focus. Prayer is the response.

Personal Application...

Pray for the Word to run. Ask God to open doors, strengthen teachers, protect the church from wicked opposition, and cause His Word to be glorified in those who hear it.

Biblical Observations

Observation 2

3 But the Lord is faithful,

† who shall stablish you,

† and keep you from evil.

4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you,

† that ye both do

† and will do

† the things which we command you.

- the Lord is faithful... Paul contrasts the faithlessness of wicked men with the faithfulness of the Lord. Not all men have faith, but the Lord is faithful. The church's confidence rests first in God's character, not human reliability.

- stablish you... The Lord strengthens and settles His people. After the warnings of Chapter 2, this is important. God does not merely warn His people about deception; He strengthens them to stand.

- keep you from evil... The Lord guards His people. This does not mean believers never face opposition, but that evil does not have final authority over those who belong to Christ.

- confidence in the Lord touching you... Paul's confidence in the Thessalonians is confidence in the Lord's work among them. Their obedience matters, but their obedience is grounded in the Lord who establishes them.

Personal Application...

When people are faithless, return to the faithfulness of the Lord. Ask Him to stablish your heart and keep you steady in obedience.

Biblical Observations

Observation 3

5 And the Lord direct your hearts

† into the love of God,

† and into the patient waiting for Christ.

- direct your hearts... Paul prays for the Lord to guide the inner life of the church. The heart must be directed because fear, deception, bitterness, idleness, and distraction can pull the believer out of alignment.
- love of God... The first direction is into the love of God. A church corrected by prophecy must remain grounded in love. Truth without love can become harsh; love without truth becomes unstable. Paul holds them together.
- patient waiting for Christ... The second direction is endurance connected with Christ. The church waits, but not passively. Patient waiting is steadfast endurance while continuing in faith, obedience, and good works.

Personal Application...

Ask the Lord to direct your heart before asking Him to change your circumstances. A rightly directed heart can remain steady even when the times are confusing.

Biblical Observations

Observation 4

6 Now we command you, brethren,

† 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.

- we command you... Paul speaks with authority. This is not a personal preference or optional advice. He commands in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- withdraw yourselves... The church is to create distance from disorderly conduct. This is not hatred, revenge, or social cruelty. It is a sober response to behavior that refuses apostolic instruction.

- walketh disorderly... Disorderly conduct means walking out of order, out of step, and outside the pattern received from the apostles. The issue is not weakness or immaturity alone, but a persistent refusal to walk according to the instruction given.

- tradition... The tradition here is apostolic teaching and practice handed down to the church. Paul has already told them to stand fast and hold the traditions taught by word or epistle. Chapter 3 applies that principle to daily conduct.

Personal Application...

Take spiritual order seriously. Grace does not excuse disorder. A faithful church loves enough to correct, and corrects in a way that seeks restoration.

Biblical Observations

Observation 5

7 For yourselves know

† how ye ought to follow us:

† for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

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:

9 Not because we have not power,

† but to make ourselves an ensample unto you

† to follow us.

- follow us... Paul does not merely command; he gives an example. Apostolic authority is joined with apostolic pattern. The Thessalonians had seen how Paul and his companions lived among them.
- not disorderly... Paul's ministry was not marked by spiritual talk without practical responsibility. His life matched his teaching.
- labor and travail night and day... Paul worked with effort and hardship so that he would not become a burden to the church. He had the right to support, but he chose to model responsibility for their sake.
- ensample... The example matters because the church learns not only through instruction but through visible patterns of faithful living. Paul's conduct gave the believers a model to imitate.

Personal Application...

Do not underestimate the teaching power of example. Your life is instructing someone. Ask whether your habits make obedience clearer or more confusing for those watching you.

Biblical Observations

Observation 6

10 For even when we were with you,

† this we commanded you,

† that if any would not work,

† neither should he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some

† which walk among you disorderly,

† working not at all,

† but are busybodies.

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.

- if any would not work... Paul addresses refusal, not inability. This command is not aimed at the sick, elderly, disabled, unemployed through no fault of their own, or those in genuine need. It confronts willing idleness and irresponsibility among those able to work.

- working not at all, but are busybodies... Idleness does not remain empty. When people refuse proper responsibility, they often become improperly occupied in the affairs of others. Disorderly living can damage the peace of the body.

- with quietness they work... Paul's answer is simple and direct: quietness, work, and personal responsibility. The goal is not public shame for its own sake, but restoration to an orderly life.

- eat their own bread... The phrase emphasizes responsibility and dignity. Believers should not use the generosity of the church as a cover for laziness.

Personal Application...

Examine whether your life is marked by quiet faithfulness or distracting disorder. Work faithfully where God has placed you, and do not confuse spiritual interest with meddling in the responsibilities of others.

Biblical Observations

Observation 7

13 But ye, brethren,

† be not weary in well doing.

14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle,

† note that man,

† and have no company with him,

† that he may be ashamed.

15 Yet count him not as an enemy,

† but admonish him as a brother.

- be not weary in well doing... The obedience of the faithful must not be weakened by the disorder of others. Paul tells the brethren not to become tired of doing what is right.
- note that man... Persistent disobedience is not ignored. The church is to recognize and respond to open refusal of apostolic instruction. This protects the body and calls the disorderly person to repentance.
- have no company with him... Separation has a corrective purpose: that he may be ashamed. Biblical shame here is meant to awaken conscience and lead to restoration, not to crush the person.
- not as an enemy... This is crucial. Church discipline must never become hatred. The disobedient person is admonished as a brother. Correction remains inside the family logic of the church.

Personal Application...

Do not let another person's disorder make you quit doing good. Correct when needed, but keep the heart of a brother. The aim is restoration, not humiliation.

Biblical Observations

Observation 8

16 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.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

† be with you all.

† Amen.

- the Lord of peace Himself... After strong correction, Paul closes with peace. This matters. Biblical order is not opposed to peace; it serves peace. The Lord who commands order is also the Lord who gives peace.

- peace always by all means... Paul's prayer is broad and generous. The church needs peace in every season, through every difficulty, and by every means the Lord appoints.

- mine own hand... Paul authenticates the letter with his own hand. This connects back to the problem of false claims and forged authority. The church is not to be shaken by counterfeit messages.

- grace... The final word is grace. The letter has included persecution, judgment, deception, restraint, discipline, and correction, but it closes in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Personal Application...

Let the Lord of peace rule your response to correction. Stand in truth, walk in order, and receive the grace that keeps the church steady.

Chapter 3 Review

Summary

Second Thessalonians chapter 3 brings the letter from prophetic correction into practical obedience. Paul asks the church to pray that the word of the Lord would have free course and be glorified. He acknowledges opposition from unreasonable and wicked men, but immediately grounds the church in a greater truth: the Lord is faithful.

The chapter then calls believers to order. Those who walk disorderly and refuse apostolic instruction are not to be encouraged in their disorder. Paul reminds the church of his own example of labor and responsibility, then commands those who are idle and meddling to work with quietness and eat their own bread.

The final verses preserve the balance of biblical correction. The disobedient brother is to be noted and admonished, but not counted as an enemy. The chapter closes with peace and grace, showing that order, discipline, and brotherly love belong together in the body of Christ.

Key Movements in the Text

3:1–2 — Pray that the word of the Lord may run, be glorified, and that the servants of God may be delivered from wicked men.

3:3–4 — The Lord is faithful to establish and keep His people, and Paul has confidence in their obedience.

3:5 — The Lord directs hearts into the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ.

3:6 — The church is commanded to withdraw from disorderly conduct.

3:7–9 — Paul's labor provides an example for the church to follow.

3:10–12 — Those who refuse to work are corrected and commanded to work quietly.

3:13 — Faithful brethren must not grow weary in well doing.

3:14–15 — The disobedient are admonished as brothers, not treated as enemies.

3:16–18 — The letter closes with the Lord of peace and the grace of Christ.

Questions for Reflection

† Do I regularly pray for the word of the Lord to run and be glorified?

† Where do I need to trust the Lord's faithfulness more deeply?

† Is my heart being directed into the love of God and patient endurance for Christ?

† Am I walking orderly in my responsibilities, work, family, and church life?

† Do I ever use spiritual concern as a cover for being a busybody?

† How can I keep doing good without growing weary?

† When correction is needed, do I treat the person as a brother or as an enemy?

One Memory Verse

2 Thessalonians 3:5

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for bringing us through this letter and for giving Your people truth that steadies the heart. Let the word of the Lord have free course among us. Let it run swiftly, be received faithfully, and be glorified through obedience.

Lord, deliver Your servants from unreasonable and wicked men. Keep us from fear when opposition rises. Remind us that You are faithful, that You stablish Your people, and that You keep us from evil.

Direct our hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ. Keep us from disorder, idleness, and distraction. Teach us to work quietly, take responsibility, and continue in well doing without growing weary.

Give us wisdom to correct as brothers, not as enemies. Let discipline in the body be marked by truth, humility, restoration, and love.

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give us peace always by all means. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

We ask this in the name of God our Father,

through His Son,

Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Source Note: Companion Bible structure and footnote helps have been summarized for teaching use; Scripture text is prepared in KJV style for class reading.