

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/2thess/2thess-3/2-thessalonians-31-5/>

Paul asks for prayers that his efforts to spread the gospel elsewhere would be as fruitful as they were with the Thessalonians. He tells them that he is confident that they will continue to grow in their faith. God and Christ strengthen us against the actions of the Devil.

Paul begins to close out his letter by writing, *Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you.*

The Thessalonians can help Paul's ministry if they *pray for* him and his team. He is most likely writing this letter from Corinth, where he lived and preached for a year and a half (Acts 18:11). Paul's hope is that *the word of the Lord* will have a profound effect and *will spread rapidly*. The *word of the Lord* here refers specifically to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news that begins with a new birth. The Thessalonians had believed the good news that the Son of God came to earth as a man and died on a cross for the sins of the whole world. Paul taught that whoever has enough faith to look at Jesus's death on the cross, hoping to be delivered, will be freely given the great gift of eternal life (John 3:14-15; Romans 5:15-16).

The gospel continues after the new birth to lead each believer to a new life, lived by faith, through the resurrection power of Jesus. *The word of the Lord* leads us in truth, and shows us that the greatest fulfillment available in life comes through obedience to God's *word* (Philippians 2:5-10).

The word of the Lord can also apply generally to the entire Bible, as the Bible is God's word in writing (2 Timothy 3:16). But the Bible also says that Jesus is the Word.

The Greek word translated *word* in the phrase *word of the Lord* is "logos." The gospel of John uses this "logos" to describe Jesus:

"In the beginning was the Word ('logos'), and the Word ('logos') was with God, and the Word ('logos') was God."
(John 1:1)

So the *word of the Lord* spreads through the deeds and words of His people, through the written pages of the scripture. But the Word of God is also Jesus, the Living Word. Paul also asserts that the entire creation spreads the gospel, because creation reflects its Creator (Romans 1:19-20, 10:16-18).

Paul also asks the Thessalonians to pray that the *word of the Lord* will *be glorified*. The word translated *glorified* has the Greek root "doxa" which means "something's essence being observed." This can be seen in Paul's letter to the believers in Corinth, where he contrasts the glory ("doxa") of the moon with the glory ("doxa") of the sun, stating that each has a different glory ("doxa").

The glory of the sun and moon differ because the essence of the sun differs from the essence of the moon (1 Corinthians 15:40-41). Paul also describes the glory of certain people who are enslaved to their appetites by saying “their glory is in their shame.” By this Paul is saying that the shame of their behavior is displaying the essence of their character, which in this case is shameful. In all cases, “glory” requires the essence of something to be observed.

Therefore, by asking for prayer that *the word of the Lord* might *be glorified*, Paul is asking his Thessalonian children in the faith to pray that the truth of the gospel will be visibly manifested, such that the gospel’s essence might be observed. Paul added *just as it did also with you*. This shows that Paul is praying that the gospel will be lived out and exhibited by believers throughout the world, just as it was through the Thessalonian believers.

The start of the good news of the *word of the Lord* is that we can be accepted into God’s family through having enough faith to look on Jesus, hoping to be delivered from the poison of sin (John 3:14-15). But the good news does not end there. Jesus will return as a conquering king one day, and will rule the earth in perfect peace, and ultimately establish a new earth in which righteousness reigns (2 Peter 3:13). Thus the earth will be restored, and become an earth where righteousness dwells. Incredibly, the good news also includes a promise that those who are faithful in living out the *word of the Lord*, being faithful witnesses, will be given the immense reward of entering into the joy of reigning with Jesus (Revelation 3:21; Romans 8:17b).

This is what the Thessalonians believed, and what they looked forward to when Christ comes back. This was a big part of their motivation to live as faithful witnesses despite the persecution they endured, in order to obtain a reward of inheritance in God’s kingdom (2 Thessalonians 1:5). They believed in the good news Paul shared.

Paul asks for prayer that the good news will *spread rapidly*, and *be glorified* through the changed lives of those whom it has affected, *just as it did also* with the Thessalonians.

He also asks for the Thessalonians to *pray* for safety for him and his team from his enemies: *that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith*. The Thessalonians knew firsthand of persecution from those who did not *have faith*. When Paul first preached the gospel to them, he and his team were soon afterwards driven out of town by an angry mob of *perverse and evil men* (Acts 17:5-10). These were men who did not *have faith* in God; they did not believe the truth of the good news. They were avid opponents of the good news.

Paul turns his attention from a request concerning his own ministry back to the welfare of the Thessalonians: *But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one*. The Thessalonians are also experiencing persecution from *perverse and evil men*, people who are, perhaps unwittingly, doing the work of *the evil one*, Satan, the fallen angel and enemy of God (Psalm 8:2). But since *the Lord is faithful*, God will *strengthen and protect* His children from Satan’s activity. As the scripture promises, when believers resist Satan, he will flee (James 4:7).

Paul has urged the Thessalonians to excel, grow, and increase their love for all men and their perseverance in the face of trials (2 Thessalonians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 4:1). Yet he has always

praised them for how well they are already doing in pleasing God and living a life set apart from the world (1 Thessalonians 1:6-7). Thus he encourages them again that *We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command*. Paul's assessment of the Thessalonians is consistent in both his letters: that they are doing well in the present, that they *are doing...what we command*.

Paul has great *confidence* that the Thessalonians will continue as they are for future faithfulness, that they *will continue to do what we command*. This is because the Thessalonians have believed the good news of God and His word, that walking in obedience to the commands of God is the path to experiencing the greatest fulfillment in life. This takes faith, since walking apart from the ways of the world brings persecution, as the Thessalonians have experienced, and endured.

Paul offers one more blessing: *May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ*. This is one of the great themes of these Thessalonian letters, that by their *love* they will grow in their faith, but that they must also have *steadfastness* to withstand the world's attacks on them. And this *love* and *steadfastness* come from *God* and from *Christ*. Our help is received spiritually from our Heavenly Father and our Savior, not from our own force of will. The *steadfastness of Christ* was to walk in obedience to His Father, trusting that His Father's commands were for His best, and that His Father's rewards were worth enduring difficulty (Philippians 2:5-10).

In the following verses, Paul will address one more point of concern specific to the Thessalonian church before concluding this letter: slothfulness.

Biblical Text

Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; ² and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. ³ But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. ⁴ We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. ⁵ May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.