

## 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5 - Strengthened for Every Good Work

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[ 0 : 00 ] Do you have your Bibles with you? We're in two Thessalonians. One of the privileges, I suppose, of working with lots of children in school, and it is a privilege, is you get to hear all the latest trends and thoughts and what's bandied about on social media and all the rest of it.

And also their worries and their troubles in what they see as a very broken world, a world without hope. And they're actually, one thing I've noticed in the last couple of years, certainly in the last 12 months or more, is that they're actually seeking truth.

They're asking questions, and they're actually asking, or the kids in my school are, asking questions about why am I here? What is the purpose? Is there anything that is actually concrete and truth?

They're actually asking questions about God and faith, and they want to know the gospel. And it's a real privilege to share my faith with them.

And other staff as well are saying, they're asking me about what church is about and what God is about. And it's a real change in culture, particularly amongst the young people, which we're seeing what they call the kind of quiet revival, as it were.

[ 1 : 16 ] I mean, I'm praying for a loud revival, to be honest. But a quiet revival in people who are actually thinking there's got to be more than this. And they're asking, what is this all about?

So my title for the sermon kind of stems from that, really, in terms of encouragement and purpose in an unstable world. And this is why Paul has written 1 and 2 Thessalonians today.

So we're going to recap a little bit on what Simon has been preaching over the last few weeks so that we have a context and understand what this passage is all about that's there.

So we know from Acts 17 that Paul is on his second missionary journey with Silas and his understudy Timothy, and they end up in Thessalonica.

And Paul, in his own way, goes in, and he's preaching the gospel, and he's arguing with people, and he's arguing with the Jews, and he's arguing with the Gentiles in the streets as well, to the point where he is forced to leave.

[ 2 : 18 ] And he flees from there, about 50 miles down the road, it's the A1, if anybody wants to know, to Berea, is where he ends up and carries on his missionary journey there.

The church in Thessalonica at this time is going through a time of persecution, going through a time of trouble, possibly even martyrdom that is going on.

And the believers are beginning to worry that they've missed the rapture, that the day of the Lord has already happened, has already commenced, and they've been left behind.

Just a few weeks prior to this, Paul has written to them a letter of encouragement, which is 1 Thessalonians. And now he's writing to them again, in 2 Thessalonians, to address some of the theological errors or concerns about the rapture, the end times that were causing them to be shaken, Scripture says, and to get upset.

However, as we turn to 2 Thessalonians, Paul is addressing some of these concerns about the day of the Lord. He's calming them and says, don't be anxious. Don't be anxious.

[ 3 : 27 ] A bit like Jesus, who says to his disciples in Matthew 6, don't worry. Don't worry about your life, because he is in control. Although they were being persecuted and times were tough, God is kind of training them.

He's kind of discipling them. He's sort of building that resilience within them. He's building character within them. And as a church grows in faith and in number, so Satan kind of takes notice.

And he doesn't like that. He quite likes Christians contained in a little box, so we don't gagged a bit. But as the church grows in faith, in that depth of relationship with the Lord, so he notices.

And trials and troubles come. We've all experienced trials and troubles through life, particularly as we walk with Christ, especially as we are open to him to change us and be like him, particularly as we become more obedient to him and encouraged by him to walk closer with him.

However, I'm pretty certain that a class in persecution is one we'd all like to miss. And you never see that, do you, in the discipleship program for new Christians.

[ 4 : 40 ] You know, sort of Christianity explored, lesson five, you know, faith under persecution or losing your head well in Paul's case. That really wouldn't kind of build faith, maybe.

I don't know. But back in Thessalonica, we have this sort of great tribulation that they think is started. And Paul is trying to teach them, it's, you know, stay calm, stay true to the teachings of the word that he's given them.

Paul is saying, I don't want you to be worried, especially by those who bring false prophetic utterance or who are deceiving others in the faith or who are saying, well, I heard Paul say this, or I've got a letter from Paul that says this.

He's saying it's not true. It's not true. Paul is saying to them, the enemy has many ways to deceive you. Hence why Paul is saying, stay away from those nut jobs on YouTube.

Turn off your social media and put down your tablets. They're only meant to have 10 commands anyway. So stay away from those who are proclaiming those deceptive messages.

[ 5 : 51 ] You know, the people that interpret every single bit of the news to the nth degree, you know, there's a war over here, there's a famine over here, there's a flood over here, whatever it might be, and therefore predict Jesus is coming back at two o'clock on Wednesday morning, whatever it might be, or now Lord will be good.

You know, he's saying read the scriptures, listen to the apostles' teaching, keep your focus on Christ and not on the things of this world. Paul begins to speak to the believers in chapter two, verse two, to be calm and not to be shaken.

Let no one deceive you by false teachings, verse three. We know that the rapture has not happened because the rebellion, which Simon spoke about last week, also called the apostasy, must come first.

Why? Because God has a plan. He reveals some of it through scripture to us, but it's in his timing and in his ways. The great rebellion or the tribulation is related to a world after the church has been removed.

Or as one person said, I found quite helpful, why would God beat up the bride before the wedding? It doesn't make sense. To get slightly technical, that is a pre-tribulation view.

[ 7 : 07 ] Some have a post-tribulation view, some have a mid-tribulation view. My view is kind of like, I'm hoping for the best and preparing for the worst. I think it kind of comes there.

But what's important is that we stick to scripture, that we pray and we don't fall out over such matters. Isn't that right, Bill? There we go. The great falling away, however, in the body of Christ occurs at the beginning of the day of the Lord, when the man of lawlessness, also known as the Antichrist or the son of destruction, is not yet being revealed as we see in Daniel 9.

And Paul is saying, know your scriptures. God will reveal this to you. I think Paul is saying that when the rapture occurs, us being salt and light who have gone, therefore there is wholesale rebellion.

Why? We get that in verse 10 where the answer is says because they refuse to believe the truth and they're deceived by false wisdom and false signs and wonders.

And we see this in Exodus 7 when the altercation between Moses and Pharaoh, when Pharaoh brings in his magicians and you see the mimicking of what God is doing through Moses.

[ 8 : 27 ] But to a point, there is a control there. There is a point where he can't do it anymore. However, we know that the coming of the Antichrist is being held back.

A time is determined by God the Father. He is being restrained and it's constantly showing us that God is in control. Everything happens in his time according to his will, according to his plans and not ours.

If we look back at the book of Job, Satan has to ask permission from God to persecute Job, to inflict illness on Job.

And there are controls around that. There are things that he can and cannot do. It's according to God's plan. We see this again when Jesus says to Peter, Satan has asked my dad whether he can sift you.

And it's all right. I've prayed for you. Now I get a sense here that Peter might give Jesus a little bit of a quiz-tive look and kind of go, I'm crying. Legion of angels might be good, but you know, prayer is good.

[ 9 : 33 ] But he's prayed. And there's a whole sermon in that that's there. The beginning and the end of the tribulation is referenced in verse 8, a seven-year span in one verse.

It's ended simply by the breath of God's mouth, referring to a word from God that is ended. Just as the word from God created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1, here he wraps all things up by his word.

Therefore, in verse 11, God gives people over to a delusional mind. And I think we're seeing some of this today in some of the decisions that is made. The lack of wisdom, the lack of reasoning behind the logic of the decisions that are made in politics and economics and science, etc.

And it's just madness when you actually look at it. And the younger people are beginning to see this, which I find quite interesting. However, if we move into the section for today, that's the kind of backstory.

So we're in 2 Thessalonians 2, verses 13 to 17 to start off with. And it says, But we ought to always give thanks to God for you, brothers, beloved of the Lord, because God has chosen you as the first fruits, also translated differently in some Bibles, to be saved.

[ 10 : 50 ] Through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So then, brothers, stand firm, hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by this letter. Now, may the Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work, every good work and word.

Following on from, from the teaching around the second coming of Christ, Paul starts this part with the word, but, in verse 13. He takes on the role of a pastor here, coming alongside the church that feels pretty beaten up, pretty torn down, loaded up with suffering, kind of feel like they've left on the Christian, the side of the Christian highway, as it were.

They're confused and they're quite anxious. Paul has been talking about the tribulation up to this point and addressing that kind of eschatological error. And the next five verses, he reshores hope.

He's encouraging them in an unstable world. He brings light into the darkness of the world in which they live. Paul begins in verse 13 by giving thanks.

[ 12 : 16 ] He states, but, we give thanks to God for you disciples in Thessalonica or you disciples here in Calvary Chapel because he has chosen you from the beginning of time to obtain the glory of the Lord Jesus.

It seems obvious, isn't it, that we always give God thanks. We give him thanks for everything. But here he's saying we especially give you thanks because of the free gift of salvation that by his grace for those of us who believe, he has given.

But, do we give thanks to the Lord for each person here in this church? The person who sat next to you, the person who serves coffee, the person who's leading children's church, the person who's doing the sound, whatever it might be, do we give thanks for each other?

Paul is saying, when the Lord calls us, we rightfully rejoice and give thanks to him. Why? Because he has chosen us on the basis of his grace and his mercy.

Just look around at each one of us. Look at the person to your left and to your right, the person behind. You know, God has chosen each person here to be with him. However, it seems reasonably clear from scripture that he has chosen individuals from the beginning of time.

[ 13 : 35 ] But the offer of salvation is open to all. And it's this tension between predestination and free will that we live with, or some of us live with, or I live with. To understand that foreknowledge of God, I find quite challenging.

But we're going to come back to that in just a bit. that the door is open for all and yet God knows who has chosen from the beginning of time.

Yet people can choose him for their own free will. Paul, in this part of the letter to the church, is focusing on these young Christians, and they are fairly new Christians, on the sovereignty of God.

That God has chosen them. God has actually chosen them and he has chosen us lot in Calvary to be with him for eternity.

Just think about that for a second. How would you feel if the King of England has said to you, come and live in my palace, Buckingham Palace, for a week, a month, for the rest of your lives?

[ 14 : 40 ] Now multiply that by a gazillion times and that's what the creator of the universe, the King of Kings, has said to each one of us. That we can be with him. He wants us to be with him for the whole of eternity.

Isn't that the most incredible thing? Isn't that the most incredible thing? And it's only possible and it's only true because of what Jesus did on that cross at Calvary.

He paid the price for us to be with him for eternity. Paul is using the word but here to contrast that with the previous section that we just reviewed. As he talks to the church about those who are saved and those who are called.

Those that are comforted. And there's two ways he's doing that. The first part in verses 13 to 15, he writes about their position in God.

And verses 16 and 17, their practice before God. Their position because from the beginning, from Genesis 1-2 as it were, God has chosen you and I for salvation.

[ 15 : 44 ] Contrasting that with verse 10 which Simon spoke about last week. For those who are deceived, those who refuse the truth, those who are perishing, those not chosen, those who did not choose.

And that's why I think in the UK we're kind of experiencing that waking up, that realization that actually there is a God and he is in control. That there is a truth in this gospel that these Christians are talking about.

and the younger generation are beginning to lock into that. In Ephesians 1-5 it says, Paul says that he has chosen us in him before the foundations of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love he predestined us to be adopted sons and daughters through Jesus Christ. And if we go on a little bit in that passage to Ephesians 1-11 it says, you have obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to his purposes.

Reiterating Jesus' final prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane in John 17-24. Jesus says explicitly, there's going to be a number of verses coming up here, Jesus says explicitly in John 15-16 that we did not choose him but he chose us and he's appointed us to go and bear fruit.

[ 17 : 09 ] However, this does not negate the idea of free will as we read in Romans 10-13 that all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. Or in Mark 8, whoever wishes to come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Paul talks about their position in God. In other words, is Paul confirming who we, or the Thessalonians, are chosen as God is sovereign or do we have free will and accept and reject the Lord?

My proper answer is yes. And I'll leave it at that basically. However, Paul is teaching about their security and their position in Christ.

That we are sons and daughters of a sovereign God. Paul is saying that salvation is through faith in Christ and sanctification by the work of the Holy Spirit in each one of us.

therefore, in verses 13 and 14, we have the past and the present in that one verse. That we are set apart from this world, yet we're in the world, yet we're not of the world.

[ 18 : 17 ] And this is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in each one of us. We're kind of undergoing a lifelong cleaning or ordering process, a kind of a continuous scrubbing of the insides of it until we show the cleanliness of a holy God on the outside.

So most of us kind of know the sins that we commit, but God knows every sin that we have committed and he still loves us. Anyone who loves me and obeys my teaching, God is saying that he will come and make his home within us.

That just blows my mind to think that God is within me. Therefore, that that was unholy must be made holy by the blood of the lamb and probably a bit of internal scrubbing at the same time.

If we then look to the future, then we are standing in front of the throne of God, not because of anything that we have done, but because of what Christ did on the cross, that the Jesus was the lamb that had to be sacrificed in order to overcome the curse of sin and death.

So post-resurrection, he would send his Holy Spirit to sanctify us, to set us apart to be holy and therefore at the same time convicted the world of sin in John 16 verses 7 and 8.

[ 19 : 39 ] This is so important to understand that Paul reiterates it here in this passage for us. You having become a Christian is not simply about attending church.

You don't become a Christian simply by attending church. In the same way as I'm never going to be a great basketball player by sitting next to Matt for a day. There might be one or two other issues around that as well, may I add, but that's one of them that's there.

We are Christians because of the good work that God has done and is doing in each one of us as we believe in the truth, the one and only gospel.

There is no other gospel. There is only one gospel. We have a world that is falling apart where they say there's no absolute truth or everything is relative. But yet we who are chosen believe, have faith in an absolute truth in the word of God and the person of Jesus Christ.

A realization that actually John 3.16 is true and the foundation stone of that truth is Jesus Christ. Paul is writing to the believers in Thessalonica saying, don't get caught up by false teachers.

[ 20 : 52 ] Don't get dragged into some sort skewed doctrine. Stop listening to these people that are pulling you apart. Follow the apostles' teaching and that that was revealed by the Spirit through Paul.

Look for Christ and not the man of lawlessness. The Holy Spirit has come and he is truth and he will lead us into all truth. John 16.13 How does God call us?

By the telling of the gospel which is good news and it really is good news. It says in Hebrews 8.12 God will remember our sins no more and in Micah 7.19 it says that our sins are cast into the deepest sea and I suspect with a great big sign over that says no fishing.

Do not look. Don't enter. That's there. Which is why Paul is saying I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for salvation in Romans 1.16 Why has he called us in verse 14 Paul says that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ just as Jesus prayed in John 17.22 So to tie this section together to those he predestined to those he called to those that he justified to those he glorified which is Romans 8.30 Isn't it an incredible thing that we gain his glory?

Doesn't that just kind of cut you right into the heart that when we stand before the throne of God God sees the glory of Jesus' son whom he loved in us?

[ 22 : 36 ] And I find that just blows me away. I can't comprehend that in my head. So Paul is instructing them in verse 13 to stand firm to hold to the traditions which you were taught whether by the word of mouth or by this letter which is the inspired word of God.

Let's just pause there for a moment. In the early church we read in Acts 2.42 that they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching to prayer to fellowship and to the sharing of meals.

It's kind of an advert there isn't there for life groups the importance of life groups and meeting together and sharing. The Lord through Scripture is telling them and us how important it is to meet together not just as a church on Sunday which gives us corporate worship and prayer and teaching and fellowship in the Spirit but midweek where we can share and discuss and learn how to work out this word in our everyday lives.

It's kind of easy when we're all gathered together in agreement but when we're at work or down the shops it is much harder. Because the word has to be a lamp unto our feet Psalm 119 verse 105 that we have to turn it on we have to open it we have to read it we have to meditate on it we have to memorise it for it to be a lamp unto our feet.

However meeting to discuss theology and doctrine is one thing but it's quite another to do it without this book in front of you which is why Paul is saying by the word of the apostles teaching verbally or in written form.

[ 24 : 18 ] What is important here Paul is saying is that you stand firm. Paul is saying to the church in Thessalonica and to us today in an ever changing world where the foundations are shifting where everything is relative what he's saying to us today is we need to believe in the truth that is revealed in scripture.

We need to stand firm on the word of God even though people might disagree with us even though people might threaten us we stand firm in the word of God.

That is our challenge and our encouragement for today that we stand fast on the word and the spirit we exercise those spiritual disciplines of reading our Bibles of praying of fasting of meeting together so that we see our character change to be more like Jesus.

I don't know about you but when people meet me I want them to encounter the Lord. Sometimes they might need spec savers to see it I must admit but that's my journey that's what I want in the end I want them to be able to see Jesus in me and we stand firm don't we with the whole armor of God so that we can stand against the schemes of the enemy of the devil Ephesians 6 11 and carry the gospel to whomever we meet and it's not a recommendation here Paul is saying you must stand firm not on sand not on a beach where you're sinking down and you get worried and confused but on solid ground on the gospel by tradition here we are talking about what has already been established through the apostles teaching not man-made traditions where we can fall out because I don't know we've changed the way the chairs are laid out or we no longer have coffee but Earl Grey tea I wonder what

Simon would say we hold to the word of God we die to our flesh and we live by the spirit united in our love for him as we serve God who died for us he gave his very life for us Paul encourages them and us in a short prayer in the next section which is verses 16 to 17 that we practice what we practice before God he has established our position in Christ in the first section verses 13 to 15 now Paul is asking them is not asking them to be removed from their suffering or their persecution but that they be comforted that their hearts are strengthened why because he wants them to continue in every good work to preach the gospel make disciples and grow and growing the kingdom in a single verse Paul brings the past present and future together from Genesis to Revelation in one verse he says

[ 27 : 15 ] God has loved you he brings you that eternal comfort today and we have a future hope in him on his return the whole thing is there in just one verse the hope given to us is not in ourselves but in the heavenly hope revealed by Jesus and working through us by his spirit strengthening us to do every good work to say and do the right things not just on a Sunday or in life group but at work at home as we're walking down the street as Bob said a few weeks ago even in the car when somebody cuts you up this is what makes us different from the world our destiny or our highway to Zion as it would be or to be with God in his kingdom we have an absolute truth in Christ and not a counterfeit or an antichrist Paul's prayer is for hope comfort strength to endure the persecution encourage each other keep the faith and remain united not divided by false teachings and that brings us all the way back to the beginning of this verse 13 that is that we give thanks to the Lord and thank him for churches thank him for churches like this in

Calvary if we then go on to the first part of chapter 3 verses 1 to 5 and he says finally brothers pray for us that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored as happened amongst you and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men for not all have faith but the Lord is faithful he will establish you and guard you against the evil one and we have confidence in the Lord about you that you are doing and will do the things that we command may the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ Paul then transitions into chapter 3 not the chapter 3 existed when he wrote it by the way from praying from the relative new Christians in Thessalonica to humbly!

asking them new believers for prayer for themselves for Paul Silas and Timothy having prayed for the church to be doers and not just hearers of the word he as a leader of the church is asking those young Christians for prayer why?

so Paul can show them his dependence on the Lord so that the gospel the word of God may spread rapidly and be glorified verse one just as he saw in Thessalonica notice that he didn't ask for safety he didn't ask for healing he didn't ask for provisions!

His focus was totally on doing the will of God for that we are all called that the gospel is preached quickly as he goes out there's a sense of urgency about the way Paul goes about everything really how often do we pray that sort of request let alone how often do we practice it if we did we might well understand what persecution means I read an article recently about a man in an Iranian in Iran in Tehran and he had been invited to a house party not a Christian house party just with some friends around somebody's house and he stands up on a chair and he says I am a Christian now that's pretty declaration and I want to share this with you if you've got any questions I'm going to be sat in the corner and for the next several hours he is overwhelmed by people who are asking isn't that incredible that somebody in that kind of situation can ask that sort of thing

[ 31 : 36 ] Paul understands he is running a race to the end and he wants to finish well the race is to preach the word of God all across Europe to build the church to ensure a firm foundation for the gospel to keep moving forward Paul is very aware of his weaknesses in the flesh the temptations of the world the work of the enemy he could have stayed in Jerusalem and in the safety of the synagogue probably being quite high up in the order there he could have debated Torah all day long but that would have been disobedience and it was not what he was called to do this was not his focus his focus was on getting the word getting the!

gospel out to people he understands the pressure the church and church leadership can be under from those outside the faith just look at the state of the world today some aspects are indistinguishable from the world that we live in and diametrically opposed to some of the teachings of scripture but surely this should break our hearts when we see Christians going down this road Paul knows this and he's encouraging!

the new believers in the power of intercessory prayer especially for church leaders that they do not fall Paul has completed this major teaching address he's corrected the theological error around the day of the Lord and their concerns around the tribulation and the rapture which Simon has spoken about in the past in just a few words Paul shows his humility that he needs prayer from the brethren the family as we are descendants from the same ark as it were hence the same family Paul who has been rabbinically trained under the famous Gamaliel he calls us the Pharisee of Pharisees someone with a huge experience in church planting and evangelism a gifted man who is highly effective and anointed by God a great communicator with significant spiritual insight to say the least this

Paul knew that none of this came from himself but the effectiveness came from the Lord he knew that none of this mattered if his character was not formed by the spirit if he did not walk in obedience to the Lord if he did not have the mind of Christ as it were if he did not have a deep love for people it was all for nothing hence Paul's strong desire here is pray for us please pray for us pray for your leaders in other words every time we share the gospel we do so because we love people those that are created in the image of God we do so because we want to be obedient to Christ we do so because we want to talk about Jesus the cross and the resurrection what was accomplished at Calvary for those who believe in the faith those who have repented and been baptized the purpose is for our eternal!



life in Christ and we they are desperate to hear this message from us and therefore we need to take this great commission really seriously in Matthew 28:19 to go and make disciples not converts disciples to do what Paul did here in this young church of Thessalonica who were once converts but now he is the teacher and pastor he disciplines them even from afar Paul's continuous focus his motivation his desire to pray is that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly so that sheep are fed and we're not just entertaining the goats Paul focuses on an important relationship between the shepherd and the sheep and it's not always a picture perfect scenario we haven't always got this lush green grass with beautiful fluffy little sheep bouncing!

[ 35 : 46 ] around wispy clouds sweeping majestically over over the sky with little bo peep having a little rest underneath the tree because sometimes the sheep go astray sometimes they might nip each other sometimes they make life rather challenging for the shepherd shepherd I'm going to shepherd I'm going to stop I'm going to stop because we're going down a line here that's not going to end well but you get the analogy that we're talking about Paul wants to share some practical advice some timely principles that govern that vital relationship between shepherds church leaders and pastors and their flock in verses 1-5 ensuring it's related to the shepherd's responsibility in verses 3-5 we have the sheep's responsibility so when in unity we have a strong church a strong committed shepherd needs to ensure the gospel is preached that the word of the

Lord goes out rapidly literally to run with the gospel that the gospel travels unhindered in verse 1 Paul here shows his love for the flock by recognizing that the gospel is traveling the church is growing that they're growing in maturity as disciples the second thing is that leaders must stand firm on the word and actively stand firm on the word and that's a challenge for today that there's so much opposition from perverse and evil men verse 2 there was then and there is today or those that are opponents of the truth relativism is a problem that we have for today who try to dissuade people from the truth of scripture Paul recognizes this human opposition and the work of Satan here and thirdly leaders must depend upon the Lord it sounds obvious but sometimes it is not always true more than that we must have a deep desire to have a dependency on the

Lord a trust in the Lord that he will keep them and the flock from the evil one verse three shepherds constantly face attack from the wolves and it's sad when we hear of a church leader who has fallen who is going down a wrong path behind these attacks is Satan who is engaged in that spiritual battle hence why Paul to the Ephesians insists that they wear the full armor of Christ Ephesians 6:11 which includes truth which includes righteousness which includes the gospel of peace faith salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God all of that comes together in order to have a strong leader and a strong church Paul makes a subtle change of focus in verses three to five and the responsibilities of the flock that he is focused on Paul changes the pronouns here from us and we in verses one and two to you and your in verses three to five

Paul shows his responsibility his pastoral responsibility to the flock as any leader or pastor must do encouraging them in the Lord to be faithful that he will strengthen and protect them from the evil one verse three Paul Silas and Timothy speak the truth that we have written here in this book today and we need to keep our focus on the Lord as the good shepherd he is the one who walks with us through the valley of the shadow of death so that we will fear no evil psalm 23:4 he is the one who comforts us by his rod and his staff and provides for us abundantly!

in the presence of our enemies verse 5 for that same psalm so see while satan is roaming the earth seeking to destroy god's creation devour those that are made in his image 1 peter 5 8 we can see through the laws passed recently that they come from the pit we were just talking about this morning we as believers as Paul reassures those in in Thessalonica can resist Satan that we can stand firm in times of persecution as we know our brothers and sisters across the world do on a daily basis how because the flock must trust in God alone to perfect us to comfort us to strengthen us to establish us in him 1 Peter 5 10 the flock must trust in God's protection we must trust in God's protection and continue to follow the apostles teaching verse 4

[ 40 : 42 ] Godly leaders are empowered by the spirit to shepherd the flock however Paul says pray for leaders that they study and understand the word that they learn to live by it that they speak it that it really is a lamp unto their feet and finally in verse 5 Paul returns to prayer he prays that the Lord will direct their hearts into the love of God and the steadfastness!

He is modeling to them to pray for each other that you will always be faithful to the Lord strengthened and protected from the evil one He is encouraging them in this passage to walk with confidence with each other to trust in the Lord that we will continue to do so and continue to follow the apostles teaching following Paul's example in 1 Corinthians to be imitators of Christ to be imitators of Paul as Paul imitates Christ and always walk in obedience to both the word and the spirit so as I come to a close let the Lord direct your hearts not just today on a Sunday but Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday let him direct our hearts as we follow Christ as we follow his example let's direct us into his love and our steadfast faith in whatever the enemy wants to throw at us that we stand on solid ground not on the sand that is going to consume us that we stand on our steadfast faith in

Christ and in him alone let's pray Lord thank you for your word thank you for the truth that it reveals to us thank you for your spirit Lord who changes us from the inside out and helps us to grow to be more like you encourage us Lord in our walk with you in our boldness of faith in our proclamation of the truth in Jesus name Amen