

2 THESSALONIANS 3
1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS



T. M. Moore
A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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2 Thessalonians 3: Introduction

Reading Paul can feel like running downhill. He's always pointing us forward, pushing us on, challenging our reluctances, and urging us to draw on the grace of God. He ends his epistles to the Thessalonians in just this way.

Christians are called to run their race with endurance and not to grow weary. The more we press on, the more the Lord meets us with His grace, guards us with His peace, and extends His Kingdom into every aspect of our lives. The Thessalonians had started well, and Paul wanted them – and us – to finish well, too.

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1 That the Word May Run

Pray Psalm 33.1-5.

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!
For praise from the upright is beautiful.
Praise the LORD with the harp;
Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.
Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.
For the word of the LORD is right,
And all His work is done in truth.
He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

Read 2 Thessalonians 3.1-3.

Reflect.

1. What do you see when you think of the Word of the Lord running swiftly and being glorified? What does this have to do with you?
2. Why are “unreasonable and wicked men” a potential obstacle to the spread of the Gospel?

Meditate.

Paul shows us how to pray for those who are our shepherds in the Lord. Theirs is a ministry of the Word, that its presence and effects may increase and swiftly work to transform our churches into congregations like the one to whom Paul wrote in Thessalonica.

As the Word impacts lives, it results in God being glorified in those thus impacted. Preaching, teaching, counseling, evangelizing, sharing our experience of the Word: These are the ways the Word *runs*. And not only through the shepherds of the church, but from all the people of God as well. Pray for your shepherds, but pray for yourself and your fellow believers as well, that the Word may increase in and through you unto the glory of God.

We expect opposition to the Word, so we’re neither surprised nor dismayed when we encounter it. As we pray for ourselves and one another, we should seek boldness and patience to persevere in our witness, even though many of those with whom we talk will not be interested in our faith.

We are *delivered* from the opponents of the Gospel when we are not cowed by their threats and we continue to love them despite however *unreasonable and wicked* they may become toward us. We need prayer for this kind of courage and consistency. The Lord is faithful to empower us as His witnesses (v. 3; cf. Acts 1.8), but He expects us to seek His power in prayer, and to intercede for one another, that the Word and glory of God may advance in all our lives. If we will seek Him and continue bearing witness to His Word, He will establish us and guard us from unreasonable and wicked men, as well as from the devil.

Prepare.

1. How should you expect the Word of God to *run swiftly and be glorified* in your life? In your Personal Mission Field?

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2. Why is it important that Christians pray for their shepherds and for one another with respect to the ministry of the Word of God?

3. How is God *faithful* to establish and guard us? What does He do? Knowing this, how should we approach the work of growing in the Lord and being His witnessess?

Let us always pray for fortitude in our temporal labors and trials. Let us offer prayers for one another. Let my prayers be offered for you, and yours for me. And, brothers, do not think that you need my prayers, but that I have no need of yours. We have mutual need of one another's prayers, for those reciprocal prayers are enkindled by charity and—like a sacrifice offered on the altar of piety—are fragrant and pleasing to the Lord. Augustine (354-430 AD), Sermons 13.10

Lord, I pray that Your Word would run swiftly and that You would be glorified in me today as I...

Pray Psalm 33.

Central to this psalm is the reliability of the Word of God. Rejoice that His Word is right, His counsel true and everlasting, and His mercy available to all who fear Him and wait on Him.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 33 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

Sing with rejoicing in the Lord, for praise becomes His righteous ones!
With harps and songs raise grateful words, and let new songs of praise be sung!

Joyfully shout! His Word is true; He does His work in faithfulness.
His love prevails the whole world through; the Lord loves truth and righteousness.

God spoke and heaven came to be, and all its hosts His Spirit wrought.
He heaps the waters of the sea; the deeps their dwelling place are taught.

Let all below now fear the Lord; let all in awe of Him abide!
The worlds exist by Jesus' Word; let all on earth in Him confide.

He nullifies the nations' plans; forever stands His sov'reign Word.
All they are blessed who with Him stand – the chosen people of the Lord.

God from His throne looks down on men; He knows our works and made our hearts.
Let not Your Church, let none depend on strength or skill or human arts.

God watches those who fear His Name, who hope upon His grace and love;
He keeps their souls from death and shame who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!
We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

2 Confidence

Pray Psalm 86.11-13.

Teach me Your way, O LORD;
I will walk in Your truth;
Unite my heart to fear Your name.
I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
And I will glorify Your name forevermore.
For great *is* Your mercy toward me,
And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

Read 2 Thessalonians 3.4, 5.

Reflect.

1. What had Paul commanded the Thessalonians to do? Why was he so confident they would do this?
2. How does God *direct* our hearts? How can you know when He is directing yours?

Meditate.

In both his letters to the Thessalonians, Paul had essentially commanded them to press on in their sanctification. Praying, giving thanks, doing good, loving one another, resisting false teaching, submitting to their shepherds, standing fast in the Word – these are all aspect of what Paul had commanded as essential for them to continue growing in the Lord (2 Thess. 2.13-15).

What Paul commanded the Thessalonians, he commands us as well. Nothing must prevent us from continuing to grow in the grace and salvation of the Lord. Paul expressed confidence in the Thessalonians, that they would continue in obedience and sanctification. Would he have that same confidence in us?

He knew, of course, that only as the Lord directed their hearts would they increase in the love of God and the patience of Christ. Sanctification, like salvation, is a work of grace. The heart is the focal point of sanctification, because it houses our affections. The heart must at all times be kept in submission to the fear of God (Ps. 86.11).

The *love of God* is essential for our work and witness. The *patience of Christ* allows us to bear up under trial and to hold fast to the teaching of God's Word. Only the Lord can give us the *heart* for such disciplines. We must seek Him for them daily.

Prepare.

1. How can you tell when you are making progress in the *love of God*?
2. Can you identify any areas in your life where you need more of the *patience of Christ*?
3. Who prays for you concerning these matters? For whom do you pray?

We are convinced that action taken by one or two pious men is done through the counsel of the Spirit. Since there is no human motive placed before their eyes, and saintly men are moved to action not with an aim of personal advantage but after having proposed to themselves what is pleasing to God, it is evident that it is the Lord who directs their hearts. Basil the Great (330-379 AD), *Letters 229*

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Direct my heart – all my most earnest desires – into love and patience, Lord, so that I...

Pray Psalm 86.

Let this psalm lead you to cast yourself entirely on the Lord and His mercy, seeking grace to help you for the day ahead in all aspects of your calling.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 86 (*Andrews: Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*)

Lend me Your ear, O Lord and hear me; I am afflicted and much in need!

Rescue my godly soul, be near me; save me, O God, all my crying heed!

Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,

All day long I pray and plead.

Lift up my soul, fill me with gladness; Lord You are good, You will soon forgive.

Show me abundant lovingkindness; let all who call on You ever live.

Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,

Heed to my poor pleading give.

When in my trouble, Lord, I call You, You answer me; there is none like You!

There are no works like Yours, and all whom You have created shall worship You.

Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,

All shall glory give to You!

For You are great, You wondrous deeds do; You are the only and sovereign Lord.

Teach me Your way, let me give heed to, with all my heart, Savior, all Your Word!

Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,

Praise Your Name forever, Lord!

Great is Your mercy, Lord, toward me; You have delivered my soul from hell.

Though dreadful foes and threats arrayed be, You will Your grace and Your mercy tell!

Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,

Slow to anger, loving well!

Turn to me, Lord; be gracious to me; grant me Your strength; save Your servant, Lord!

Let me a sign of something good see; shame all who hate me beneath Your Word.

Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,

For You help me, sovereign Lord!

3 Called to Work

Pray Psalm 85.4-7.

Restore us, O God of our salvation,
And cause Your anger toward us to cease.
Will You be angry with us forever?
Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?
Will You not revive us again,
That Your people may rejoice in You?
Show us Your mercy, LORD,
And grant us Your salvation.

Read 2 Thessalonians 3.6-9.

Reflect.

1. What do you suppose Paul means by *disorderly*? Is there any disorderliness in your life?
2. What work has God called us to do?

Meditate.

The word *disorderly* (NKJV) may at first seem inadequate to translate the Greek, ἀτακτέω, which means “to refuse to engage in the efforts of work, to do nothing.” I think we’ll see it’s actually a very good choice.

In every church, I suppose, there are people who don’t take part in the work of the Gospel – either working out their own salvation, doing those good works that bring salvation to light, or working in various ways to support the church’s work of making God’s Good News known. They were there in Thessalonica, and Paul warned against them in 1 Thessalonians 5.14, as he does again here.

Such people don’t want to invest the time and effort essential for growing in the Lord, working their Personal Mission Field, and helping the church in its calling as a sign and outpost of the Kingdom of God. Their salvation is good enough for them, and they see no need to exert themselves further.

It’s a serious offense against the divine order for those who claim to be saved to fail in taking up the work we’ve been given to do. This includes, of course, the work by which we support ourselves and our loved ones, as we shall see. But the work we’ve been given to do within the divine economy is greater than the job at which we work. And when believers refuse to work – at their salvation, at good works, in the work of the church – then they are living contrary to God’s order and are therefore leading *disorderly* lives. Such believers are to be warned (1 Thess. 5.14) and then, if they persist, avoided (v. 6).

Paul again invokes his own example of working to support himself and his team even as he did the work of evangelizing the lost and organizing the church in Thessalonica (v. 7). People were made for work (Gen. 2.15). Believers have been saved for good works (Eph. 2.8-10). Without engaging in the work of the Gospel, it is impossible to demonstrate the reality of it (Jms. 2.14-17).

Our duty toward one another in the Body of Christ is what Paul demonstrates here, to stimulate one another to love and good works (Heb. 10.24). *Not* to take up the work of the Gospel is *disorderly*.

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Prepare.

1. How would you explain to a new believer the work God has appointed for us within His divine economy?
2. Meditate on Hebrews 10.24. What are some ways you can encourage other believers to be more consistent and fruitful in the work they've been given to do?
3. Like Paul, we set an example for other believers by our work. Can you see any ways you could improve the example you are setting?

We have reason to fear, therefore, lest, perchance, on the day of judgment this fault also may be alleged against us, since he who has endowed us with the ability to work demands that our labor be proportioned to our capacity. For the Lord says, "To whom they have committed much, of him they will demand much." Basil the Great (330-379 AD), The Long Rules, Q.37.R

Show me the work You have prepared for me today, O Lord, and help me to...

Pray Psalm 85.

Pray for God to restore and revive His people, and pray that He will prepare you for those good works of righteousness that He has prepared for your path today.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 85 (*Lyons: O Worship the King*)

O Lord, You Your favor showed to Your land;
Your people You saved by Your mighty hand.
Their sins You forgave, all Your wrath You withdrew;
You turned back the anger which to them was due.

Restore us, O God, renew us in peace,
And cause all Your wrath against us to cease.
Will You evermore all Your wrath to us show?
Revive us that we may Your joy again know.

Lord, show us Your love; restore us, we pray!
And help us to hear the words that You say.
Speak peace to Your people; in truth let us stand.
We fear You; let glory and grace fill our land.

In Jesus God's grace and truth are combined;
Both goodness and peace in Him do we find.
Truth springs from the earth as He walks in our midst,
And righteousness flows from the heav'ns as a gift.

The Lord by His grace will give what is good;
Our land will produce abundance of food.
And righteousness will go before the Lord's face,
And make of His footsteps a way in this place.

4 Be Responsible!

Pray Psalm 8.1.

O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent is Your name in all the earth,
Who have set Your glory above the heavens!

Read 2 Thessalonians 3.10-12.

Reflect.

1. When Paul was in Thessalonica, he worked with his own hands to provide for himself and his team. Why does he recall that here?
2. If we can expect material rewards from material work, what kinds of rewards should we expect from spiritual work?

Meditate.

It is a consistent teaching of the apostle Paul that believers should take responsibility for meeting their own needs and the needs of those who are dependent upon them (cf. Gal. 6.4, 5; 1 Tim. 5.8). It's clear that, in our text, Paul is talking about material needs. Each person should be responsible to do whatever employable work he can so as not to depend unnecessarily on others. At the same time, we must work to help meet the needs of those who, for one reason or another, cannot provide for themselves (cf. Eph. 4.28).

This principle applies as well to all the other work we've been given to do: growing in the Lord, improving our relationships, making disciples, helping to build the church, seeking the Kingdom, caring for our possessions and property as unto the Lord. We should expect to know benefit from such works, albeit a benefit which we enjoy in our souls, and not something necessarily material in nature. Satisfaction, joy, peace, growth in the Lord, contentment, thanksgiving, spiritual fruit. These are the rewards we gain when we are faithful in the work to which the Lord calls us, beyond that by which we make a living. Each of us is responsible to work for these rewards as well.

Again, the norm for the divine economy – the *order* God has mandated – is that His people should work, beginning with working out their salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2.12) and extending to the work of seeking the Kingdom, and then to providing for their own needs. Those who will not work as God commands transgress against the order of His Kingdom. They must be encouraged and assisted to take their place in the work of the Kingdom by learning faithfulness and responsibility in all the work they've been given to do.

Prepare.

1. How would you describe the work God has given you to do? What does it mean to do such work as unto the Lord (Col. 3.23)?
2. Other than material rewards, what rewards do you typically receive from the work you do (Col. 3.24)? How precious are these to you?
3. How can believers help one another to be more faithful in all the work we've been given to do?

Everyone, therefore, in doing his work, should place before himself the aim of service to the needy and not his own satisfaction.

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*Thus, he will escape the charge of self-love and receive the blessing for fraternal charity from the Lord, who said, "As long as you did it to one of these, the least of my brothers, you did it to me." Basil the Great (330-379 AD), The Long Rules, Q.42.R
Lord, help me to desire those spiritual rewards that are such a blessing to my soul, so that I...*

Pray Psalm 8.

Pray for yourself, for the work God has given you to do in bringing His goodness to the world. And pray for the Christians you know, that they may do all their work as unto the Lord.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 8 (*Aurelia: The Church's One Foundation*)

O Savior, how majestic, Your Name in all the earth!
The heav'ns display Your glory, and tell Your wondrous worth!
From babes and nursing infants, Lord, let Your strength increase,
Till all Your foes surrender, and all their boasting cease.

When I regard Your heavens, Your handiwork above,
Ordained by Your good pleasure, according to Your love,
Then what am I, O Savior, that You take thought of me?
Or I should know Your favor and thus delivered be?

Yet we in Your own image with glory have been crowned,
To worship and to serve You throughout creation 'round.
These works that sing Your glory in our poor hands are placed,
That we may rule before You to magnify Your grace.

Let every beast and creature, in sky or sea or field,
In our hands bring You glory as we Your favor wield.
Let all things sing Your praises, let all declare Your worth!
O Savior, how majestic, Your Name in all the earth!

5 This Is Serious

Pray Psalm 128.5, 6.

The LORD bless you out of Zion,
And may you see the good of Jerusalem
All the days of your life.
Yes, may you see your children's children.
Peace *be* upon Israel!

Read 2 Thessalonians 3.13-15.

Reflect.

1. What opportunities for doing good are before you today? How can you keep from growing weary of doing good works?
2. Paul seems serious about wanting us to obey his epistle. Why?

Meditate.

The proof of our salvation is not in vain speculations about the second coming of the Lord, nor merely in being involved in a local church. It's not even in our confessing faith in Jesus.

The proof of our salvation is in the good works that issue from our revived souls. As we turn our minds to know the will of God in His Word, devote our hearts to loving Him and our neighbors, and make seeking the Lord's Kingdom the top priority in everything, good works will flow by the Spirit into all our words and deeds.

But this doesn't just happen. We have to work at it, and we must not allow ourselves to become bored or weary with this calling.

We're always presented with opportunities for doing good, and for the Christian, there's no off season. As often as we have opportunity, we must do whatever good we can, and resist the temptation to weary of doing good (Gal. 6.9, 10).

For some believers, doing good works at every opportunity may be more than they signed up for. But Paul means what he says. If we know believers who are not as serious as Paul about this matter, we are to admonish them, even to the point of not keeping company with them. The Greek word here (*συναμύγυσθαι*) refers to associating with people for any reason, whether as friends or working together on projects. People who will not work hard at doing good to and loving their neighbors will not be much use to the ministries of our churches, and they can also adversely affect us with their lackadaisical approach to the faith (1 Cor. 15.33, 34).

But just because we step back from associating with such people doesn't mean we stop loving them. They are brethren in the Lord, and we have a duty to consider ways of stimulating one another to love and good works (Heb. 10.24). This begins with pointing out the obvious, that they're not being obedient to the Word of God. Having accomplished this, we should pray for our complacent brethren and do whatever we can to stimulate them to take up the Kingdom-and-glory calling of doing good works to the glory of God.

Prepare.

1. Does Paul's advice here seem harsh to you? Why or why not?

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2. How would you approach admonishing a complacent brother in the Lord? What would you do to stimulate him to love and good works?

3. How can you tell when you're getting weary of doing good? How can looking to Jesus help you to persevere?

Do not disconnect what is said here from what follows, where, having said, "have nothing to do with him," he added, "do not look on him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother." Do you see how he urges us to hate the deed but love the person? John Chrysostom (344-407 AD), Homilies on First Corinthians 33.5

Give me strength for this day, O Lord, so that I may not grow weary of doing good, but will always...

Pray Psalm 128.

Commit your way to the Lord for this day, and all the work He's given you to do. Ask Him to bring forth fruit for His glory from your labors.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 128 (*Fountain: There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood*)

How blest are they who fear You, Lord, who walk within Your ways!

Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!

They prosper all their days, they prosper all their days!

Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!

Their homes with happy children bloom who fear Your holy Name;

Their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!

Declare Your glorious fame, declare Your glorious fame!

Their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!

O Lord, from Zion send Your peace, and prosp'rous make our ways;

Thus may Your blessings e'er increase upon us all our days!

Upon us all our days, upon us all our days:

Thus may Your blessings e'er increase upon all us all our days!

6 Peace and Grace

Pray Psalm 40.16, 17.

Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;
Let such as love Your salvation say continually,
“The LORD be magnified!”
But I *am* poor and needy;
Yet the LORD thinks upon me.
You are my help and my deliverer;
Do not delay, O my God.

Read 2 Thessalonians 3.16-18.

Reflect.

1. Peace and grace tend to serve as bookends for Paul’s epistles, as we see here (cf. 2 Thess. 1.2). Why are these so important?
2. Paul implies (v. 16) that believers can be at peace “always in every way.” Is that your experience?

Meditate.

It’s easy to take these closing remarks and benedictions with a grain of salt. But they are as inspired and important as the rest of the epistle, in particular because they help us to focus on Paul’s real and constant burden for the people he served.

Peace and grace are Paul’s constant desire for the churches. Grace is that divine disposition of favor and generosity the eventuates in power for full and abundant Christian living. Grace is the work of God’s Spirit, according to God’s Word, based on the finished and interceding work of our Lord Jesus Christ. God gives His people grace so that they might be channels of that spiritual blessing to the world (Jn. 7.37-39). Without God’s grace, we can do nothing to realize our calling to His Kingdom and glory.

Peace is the environment in which the grace-filled believer lives. Because of grace, believers know a peace that goes beyond understanding, a peace we can’t really explain (Phil. 4.6, 7) but which is real, palpable, and contagious. The Thessalonians, though persecuted and harassed, could know the peace of Jesus “always in every way” by focusing on Jesus, giving thanks in everything, and pressing on in their walk with and work for the Lord.

No wonder Paul consider these two spiritual blessings to be so utterly important!

He signs off this letter – dictated to an unknown amanuensis – with his usual greeting in what was probably a recognizable hand – large and perhaps with something of a flourish (Gal. 6.11). He says he did this in “every epistle,” and this is one reason scholars are reluctant to ascribe the book of Hebrews to Paul, since such an attestation is missing.

May the grace and peace of our Lord fill you with gladness and courage to do His will. We’ll review this final chapter in our study of 1 and 2 Thessalonians in our next installment.

Prepare.

1. How would you describe the peace of the Lord to an unbelieving friend?

2. In what ways do you expect to see the grace of God at work in and through you today?
3. What would you say to a new believer to help him know the grace and peace of Jesus “always in every way”?

This prayer seems to be connected with the preceding sentence, with the view of recommending endeavors after concord and mildness. He had forbidden them to treat even the contumacious as enemies, but rather with a view to their being brought back to a sound mind by brotherly admonitions. He could appropriately, after this, subjoin an injunction as to the cultivation of peace; but as this is a work that is truly Divine, he betakes himself to prayer, which, nevertheless, has also the force of a precept. John Calvin (1509-1564 AD), Commentary on 2 Thessalonians 3.16

O Lord, let me know Your peace, and use me today as an agent of Your grace as I...

Pray Psalm 40.

Take your time through this psalm. It is what we might call a complete prayer, including praise (vv. 5, 16), confession (vv. 12, 13), various supplications and intercessions, and even a little imprecation (vv. 14, 15). Commit your day to the Lord as He leads you through this wonderful psalm.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 40 (*Dix: For the Beauty of the Earth*)

I waited patiently for God; He inclined and heard my cry,
lifted me up above the sod, set me on a Rock on high!
New songs in my mouth He gave; may He through me many save.

Blessed are all who trust in You, turning both from lies and pride.
Countless wonders, Lord, You do, and Your thoughts with us abide.
Lord, Your worth who can declare? None with You can e'er compare.

Off'rings You do not require – open now my ears, O Lord.
What from me do You desire? Firm delight to do Your Word.
Take my life in ev'ry part; write Your Law upon my heart.

Lord, Your truth will I proclaim to Your people gathered 'round,
Nor will I my lips restrain – let Your precious ways resound!
Of Your saving grace and Word I would speak, most loving Lord.

Keep Your mercy not from me; let Your love and truth prevail.
Evil and iniquity make my trembling heart to fail.
Lord, be pleased to rescue me! Let my shelter with You be.

Bring to shame my ev'ry foe, all who would my life destroy;
Bring them down to scorn and woe who at my hurt sing for joy.
Let them come to grief and shame who heap scorn upon my name.

Let them shout for joy and sing who in saving grace delight!
Let them praise to Jesus bring, though affliction be their plight.
Christ, our help, our Savior He! Of us ever mindful be!

7 Pressing On

Pray Psalm 84.9-12.

O God, behold our shield,
And look upon the face of Your anointed.
For a day in Your courts *is* better than a thousand.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
The LORD will give grace and glory;
No good *thing* will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly.
O LORD of hosts,
Blessed *is* the man who trusts in You!

Read 2 Thessalonians 3.1-18.

Reflect.

1. This is a forward-looking chapter in many ways. Why can we say that?
2. We don't advance in the life of faith without effort – work. What work has the Lord assigned to you?

Meditate.

Reading the apostle Paul always makes me think of a guy running a race who, just as he comes to the finish line, leans into the tape to gain the victory and record the best possible time. Paul's theology of the Christian life is forward-looking and forward-leaning. Consider the words in this chapter suggesting that disposition: "run swiftly," "establish and guard," "do and will do," "direct your hearts," "labor and toil night and day," "work in quietness," "do not grow weary in doing good," "give you peace."

We must not allow our faith to become bogged down in present difficulties or personal complacency. Those who drag their feet as we race together must be admonished, exhorted, and aided in fulfilling their Kingdom-and-glory calling. There's work to do – good work – and we are all called to it in every area of our lives. God's grace will enable us for such work; His peace will establish and guard us; and His power will flow through us as we lean toward the tape in our course. Let us run with endurance (Heb. 12.1, 2).

We must not grow weary. We have the infinite strength of God on which to draw, and the example of Paul (v. 7) and others to assure us that, though we have to pass through valleys of tears from time to time, the grace of God will establish, guard, sustain, and renew us as long as we are pressing on in our walk with and work for Him.

Prepare.

1. Would you describe your own faith in Christ as "forward-looking and forward-leaning"? Explain.
2. Where do you need to press on in your walk with and work for the Lord today?
3. How can you prepare for the valleys of tears you will certainly have to go through, so that you keep "leaning" toward the Kingdom and glory of God as you do?

For this is the only thing that sustains us in the warfare of the present life, that we wait for the Redeemer; and farther, this

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waiting requires patient endurance amidst the continual exercises of the cross.. John Calvin (1509-1564 AD) Commentary on 2 Thessalonians 3

Today, Lord, help me to run my race with endurance, especially as I...

Pray Psalm 84.

The Christian life is a journey. We are living sacrifices in that journey (Rom. 12.1, 2), and while we are pressing on toward the Lord's house forever, He dwells with us even now, to make all our valleys of tears opportunities for trusting and rejoicing in Him. Commit this day's journey to the Lord, then press on!

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 84 (*Holy Manna: Brethren We Have Met to Worship*)

Lord of hosts, how sweet Your dwelling; how my soul longs for Your courts!

Let my soul with joy keep telling of Your grace forever more.

Like a bird upon the altar let my life to You belong.

Blessed are they who never falter as they praise Your grace with song!

Blessed are they whose strength is founded in Your strength, O Lord above.

All whose hearts in You are grounded journey in Your strength and love.

Though they weep with tears of sadness, grace shall all their way sustain.

In Your presence, filled with gladness, they shall conquer all their pain.

Lord of hosts, my prayer receiving, hear me, help me by Your grace!

In Your courts I stand believing; turn to me Your glorious face!

Lord, our sun, our shield, our glory, no good thing will You deny

To those who proclaim Your story, and who on Your grace rely.

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Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What do we mean by saying that Paul has a “forward-looking and forward leaning” view of the Christian life?
2. What can prevent us from having such a view of our own discipleship?
3. When we feel ourselves growing weary in our race, what can we do? How can believers help one another to press on?
4. Why are peace and grace so important for us in our walk with and work for the Lord?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this chapter? How are you working to implement that lesson in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.