

2 Thessalonians 3:1–12

Serving While Waiting

Study 06 · 2 Thessalonians 3
Small Group Bible Study Series

Source: Dr. C. Norman Sellers ThD (SellersBibleInstitute.com; used by permission)

Editor: The Gospel Vault

① TEXT	② DEVOTIONAL	③ COMMENTARY	④ SELF-STUDY GUIDE
Foundation	Personal preparation	Teacher / Leader preparation	Group meeting
<i>Everyone</i>	<i>All group members</i>	<i>Teacher / Leader</i>	<i>Small group</i>

⑤ Application closes each study and draws from all sections above, plus FGR.docx.

① THE BIBLICAL TEXT

2 Thessalonians 3:1–12 · New King James Version (NKJV)

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you,

2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.

5 Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you;

8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,

9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

② DEVOTIONAL

Personal preparation · Drawn from the teaching and outline

“Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified.” — 2 Thessalonians 3:1

Most of us are not good at waiting. But the Lord’s return is not a waiting room; it is a workplace. Paul asks the church to wait on the Lord in prayer — that the Word, which has no feet of its own, would run as we carry it, and that its messengers would be kept from those who oppose the free gift.

Not all have faith, but the Lord is faithful. He establishes us so we stand on the promises instead of sitting on the premises, guards us from the evil one, and directs our hearts into God’s love and Christ’s patience — the patience He showed Philip, James and John, and Peter.

And while we wait for the Lord, we work. Paul’s example was simple: do as I do, because I do as I say — work quietly, and don’t let spare time become meddling.

For Reflection

1. Who is one leader or missionary you will pray for by name this week?
2. Where do you most need the patience of Christ with others right now?
3. Is your waiting marked more by serving or by sitting?

Trust and obey — for there’s no other way.

③ COMMENTARY

Teacher preparation resource · Full text organized under outline headings

PROPOSITION

While believers wait for the Lord's return, they serve. They wait on the Lord — praying for the Word to run and be glorified and for its messengers to be delivered, resting in the Lord's faithfulness to establish and guard them, and letting Him direct their hearts into God's love and Christ's patience. And they wait for the Lord — working quietly, following the apostle's example, and refusing to let idleness turn into meddling.

Outline: Serving While Waiting — 2 Thessalonians 3:1–12. Teacher's text is merged under the outline headings; "From the outline" lines carry outline notes, and shaded Study Notes are supplemental material drawn from the FGR resource library.

Introduction: What Do You Do While You're Waiting?

What do you do while you're waiting? I am the worst waiter there is. We go to a restaurant and they say, "Well, it'll be fifteen minutes" — of course that means a half hour. And I said, "Let's go. Let's go somewhere else. McDonald's — they're fast." I don't like to wait, and I don't know what to do while I wait. And so that is a problem with me, and it may be with some of you as well.

We have an opportunity, as we wait, to serve the Lord — serving while we're waiting, doing something. I imagine that if I thought about it a little bit, I might take a book along, take something along to do while I'm waiting. Well, Paul tells us here what we need to do while we're waiting. Oh, he told the Thessalonians, "The Lord is coming back. He's going to be here. The Lord's going to come." It hasn't come yet. Two thousand years later, they're saying the same thing. And I'm reading it, and I'm preaching it: the Lord is going to come. So what do we do while we're waiting?

I. Wait on the Lord — 3:1–5

Well, first thing we want to do — and Paul tells us to do — is to wait on the Lord. Wait on the Lord, verses 1 to 5. "Finally, brethren," he says — while you're waiting — "pray for us." Pray. Wait on the Lord. Pray to the Lord. Ah — "Sweet Hour of Prayer." Very appropriate, friend. Pray. And that's a sweet thing to do.

"Pray for us." Now, Paul tells his readers that he's praying for them. He does it all the time: "I pray for you. Night and day, I pray for you." Then he says, "Now, pray for me." It sounds like our closing chorus, doesn't it? "I'll pray for you, you pray for me." Well, Paul said he needed prayer. Paul needed prayer for himself, but he also needed prayer for his fellow workers and the team that had been there at Thessalonica and was now at Corinth.

Leaders Need Prayer

And he said, “pray for us,” because leaders need prayer. They need how to do things. There are so many people — and not here in this church; I don't know of anybody who would do this. But in a lot of churches — and I've been through it with a couple recently from another church somewhere, and they sent me all the — I got probably 500 pages of stuff that was going on in that church: “Could you help us? Give us some ideas.” I did the best I could. But that happens. People looking for things to do, looking for problems they can make for the leader. That's why leaders need prayer. Paul said, “Pray for me.”

From the outline: Paul often tells his readers that he is praying for them, but he also needs prayer for himself and his fellow workers (“us,” plural) — here, Silas and Timothy. Leaders need prayer.

A. The Content of the Prayer — 3:1–2

1. Their Ministry — 3:1

a. That the Word May Run Swiftly

Pray, first of all, he said — verse 1 — for our ministry. And this is the purpose: “that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you.” We want the Word to run. (I'm having trouble with my glasses.) That the Word of the Lord may run. And this is not “run” in connection with the Olympics — see how far we can go, how fast we can go, beat other people. No, not that. But that the Word may move swiftly. The Word needs to get out there — to move among all people and to accomplish great things.

See, the Word — look at your Bible. Got your Bible with you? Look at it. How many feet does it have? It can't run. The Bible — the Word can't run in and of itself. We have to put legs under our prayers here. We need to run with the Word, because the Word needs to run, needs to get there, needs to be used of the Lord wherever — all over the world.

b. That the Word May Be Glorified

Then he says, that the Word might be glorified. Now, how do you glorify the Word? Well, the Word is glorified when we believe it, first. You hear the Word and you say, “I believe that.” And you hear the special part of the Word: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will receive eternal life.” That's a good part of the Word. And that Word will be a ministry in us. The Word — you prize it. You take it and say, “That Word is special.”

I remember I was a youth pastor way back in the fifties in Clementon, New Jersey. We had a real fine group, and one of the things that they liked to do was they'd take their Bible to church. We recommended that. And Youth for Christ was big in that area. And they were saying, “Put your Bible on top of your books. And whenever you have it on your desk, put the Bible on top. Don't put anything on top of the Bible.” That's it. That's something that you prize, something that you show off, see? It's the

most important possession you have, the most important book you have. So he says that it might run and it might be glorified.

c. *“Just as It Is with You” — A Compliment and a Command*

It's a compliment, and it is also a command — that the Word had success among them, but in turn the Word has to go elsewhere, beyond Thessalonica. As he says, “just as it is with you” — go beyond that.

See, and then Jesus commanded — what did He command? “Go into all the world.” Have you done that yet? How many people here have been to the whole world? Only some of you have been to a few places. We haven't been to the whole world. How are you going to do that? Well, I have a suggestion: by giving and prayer, when you can't be there. That's it.

And as I wrote this in here — and today I got a check. No, no, I didn't get a check for me or for the church. I got a check to sign. I even forget the amount now; it staggered me so. We've been a little bit behind in transmitting the funds to missions, and we caught it up. The money goes to missions. We pray for missions. We give to missions. And in that way, we go there. We are there by our giving and our prayers. Now, that's the ministry. Paul says, “Pray for our ministry.”

2. Their Misery — 3:2

a. *Delivered from Unreasonable and Wicked Men*

But then he also says, pray for our misery. I made up that word. He didn't say he was miserable, but it was misery. In verse 2 he says, “and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.” There is always a competition. There's always a rejection of this Word that we have.

b. *“For Not All Have Faith”*

Then he goes on. He says, “that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.” Then he says, “for not all have faith.” I thought, why do you have to tell that? Why does he have to say that? I thought, well, I think maybe this: we get into our little conclave, you know. We get into our little group, and nobody here is rejecting the Word. Nobody here is rejecting the gospel. And so why did he say it? I think what he's saying is, if you aren't careful, you'll get the idea that, “Oh, everything's wonderful, everything's sweet. Isn't it nice? We're all together; we all agree with what we're talking about here.” No, no. Not all men have faith. Out there, they don't have that faith. Out there, they need to hear the Word.

“Pray for us,” he says, “that when we go out there, when we meet these people who are against us, these people who are against the Word — pray for us that we'll be able to handle it.” And that prayer is very important.

c. *Out of Place and Actively Harmful*

The Word, he said, is now going, and it's being glorified. But Satan is going to put a chink into the armor — going to do something. That's why his team needed prayer.

How are they going to get it? “You all pray for us,” he said. Home and abroad, we face opposition from the enemy of God — the forces that are “out of place,” he says. They’re men who are out of place. They are actively harmful.

No — they’re out of place because this place is God’s creation. God’s Word is the most important thing we have. God’s people are the apple of God’s eye. And these people are going against God’s people. They are out of place. They’re in the wrong place. And yet they seem to be the ones who are gaining the ground. He says, pray for us, because they are out of place, and they are actively harmful.

They do things against this gift of salvation. They oppose the gift. But they also oppose the one who is presenting the gift. So they oppose those who offer it: “Offer a free gift of salvation? Get out of here. We don’t want to hear that.” And so they become very actively harmful. These Thessalonians know that. They’ve seen the opposition in Thessalonica when Paul was there. Remember, Paul had to leave there, with everything he could carry with him — he’s gone — because they were after him. And he left Silas and Timothy there. But they’ve seen that. They know what it’s all about.

d. Let’s Start Bothering Satan

We haven’t had a lot of opposition yet. But Satan doesn’t bother people who are not bothering him. He doesn’t bother some churches out here — they don’t even know; it’s some kind of a club that people join. He doesn’t bother them. But he bothers people who are bothering him. I have a suggestion: let’s start bothering Satan. Let’s do things that really rile him up. And that’ll be giving the Word. So he says, that’s the content of the prayer.

From the outline: His forces consist of those who are *atopos*, “out of place,” and *ponēros*, actively harmful. They resist the free gift of salvation; not only do they oppose the gift, they oppose those who offer it. No one would harm a messenger with such good news! Satan doesn’t bother those who don’t bother him. Let’s start bothering him!

B. The Confidence in the Prayer — 3:3–4

The Lord Is Faithful: “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

Then he says there’s a confidence in the prayer, verses 3 and 4: “But the Lord is faithful.” Boy, that’s a big line. God is faithful. No matter what problem you get into, God is faithful. He’s asking you: pray to God, because when we are going out there, we need His help, and He is faithful.

We used to sing — when I went to college, the college song was “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” And they sang that, and they sang that. At every graduation, the students are out there, and they sang “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” And what I did — the faculty were all up here — and I would sit there and look, and as we sang “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” I’d go down the row of graduates, and I’d concentrate on that one, and that one, and that one, and that one, and that one. Every graduating class, they were singing “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” And my prayer was, “Make sure that

that faithfulness of God is shown in their lives.” And it has been. I’ve seen it over and over and over.

Then I came to Miami — and guess what? Their hymn was “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” And we sang it and we sang it. But it’s great. That’s true. God is faithful. And He is faithful to do all that we need.

Study Note — “Not All Have Faith ... But the Lord Is Faithful”

Verses 2 and 3 turn on a play on words that is clear in Greek: “for not all have faith (*pistis*). But the Lord is faithful (*pistos*).” Paul moves from the unbelief of his opponents straight to the reliability of God. The faithfulness of men is uncertain; the faithfulness of the Lord is not. That is why the confidence of the prayer rests not on the Thessalonians’ strength, nor on Paul’s, but on the character of God — the same truth the teacher prayed over every graduating class.

Sources (FGR): Constable, Expository Notes on 2 Thessalonians; Walvoord and Zuck, eds., The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament.

1. The Lord Will Establish You — 3:3a

He is faithful to establish you. God is faithful to “establish you.” He will cause us to stand on the promises, and not sit on the premises. He’s already written a book; it tells you what we need to do. He tells you what the faith is. He’s going to establish you in your faith. Know what you believe.

And he’ll say — He’s written a book, and He expects us to get into that book. We get into that book over there, we get into that book over here, and hopefully we get into that book at home. Wherever we go, we make plans to find out what that book says. And the more we do that, the more He will stabilize us — cause us to stand sturdy in the faith — and we’ll know what we believe. And when we learn, we have that firmness, that stability, in our lives.

From the outline: It also means to strengthen you, i.e., in your faith. If we read and study that book, we will find out what this “faith once for all delivered” is (Jude 3). The more we learn, the more He can establish us in that faith.

Could You Lead Him to the Lord? — Dr. Ryrie

Dr. Ryrie — Charles Caldwell Ryrie. I had him for a lot of classes in college and seminary. And he used to say, “Suppose you were driving down the road and you saw a big accident, and the police stopped you and said, ‘Hey, this man up here wants to know how to get to heaven. He’s dying.’” And his question was, could you go up there — No, there’s no light. — can you go up there and give that man the gospel? Can you lead him to the Lord? Can you tell him how to get to heaven? He was a very practical man, Ryrie was. And it caused you to think: could I do that? And I turn the question around: can you? We have to be able to be strong in the faith — know what the faith is, and stand in the faith. Then he says the Lord will stabilize you.

2. The Lord Will Protect You — 3:3b

He will also protect you. He will “guard you from the evil one.” Now, the word there, “the evil one,” could be just “the evil” — neuter — or “the evil one.” I think probably both, in that case. Since Satan is behind all evil — then from the one who causes the evil, and from the evil itself.

3. You Will Do as We Have Commanded — 3:4

And then he says the Lord is faithful, and you will do as we have commanded — verse 4. This confidence in the Lord’s faithfulness, then: “And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you.”

a. They Are Presently Doing These Things

You will do as you have done — as you’ve been doing. You’re presently doing these things,

b. They Will Continue to Do Them

— and you will continue to do them. So his thing is that, “Well, I know what you’ve done, and I know what God’s able to do, and so I believe that it’s going to happen with you. You’re going to do it. You’ll continue to do them.” Because, see, Paul’s optimistic about that. He is optimistic because of God’s faithfulness and because of their past work that they’ve done.

C. The Consequences of the Prayer — 3:5

So — the content of the prayer, the confidence of the prayer, the consequences of the prayer. Verse 5. He says the Lord will direct you: “Now may the Lord direct your hearts ...”

1. Into the Love of God — 3:5a

He’ll direct you into the love of God. Now, overcoming evil depends on God’s power. God also shows how to overcome evil by His example. You see — John 3 — it’s not “God so hated the world that He sent them to hell.” Not that. The message is, “God so loved the world” that He wanted them to go to heaven. So He directs our hearts — the love of God will direct your heart into His love — so that we can love the unlovely.

Have you noticed that — that you need God’s love to love some people? You get into some situations and say, “How can I get out of this mess? How can I do what the Lord wants me to do, with all these dumb people around me? They’re unlovely. They’re hateful.” And yet, when you get out there and you meet them, God’s love will help you to love them to the cross of Christ. You know what? It’s not always out there, is it? Again, I’m not talking about these people. I’m talking about wherever you meet. Sometimes you meet Christians — they’re unlovely too. God will give you His love. Have that love come into you.

2. Into the Patience of Christ — 3:5b

And He'll also — in case that doesn't work — He'll give you the patience of Christ: the end of verse 5, "and into the patience of Christ." Jesus was patient with His followers.

a. Philip — John 14:8–9

Remember Philip, John 14? Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." And Jesus said — I'm sure you've had that expression — "Philip, have I been with you so long, and you still don't know?" He's at the end of His ministry. "You don't know? You don't know that I and the Father are one? If you're seeing Me, you're seeing the Father. Wake up, Philip!"

b. James and John — the Sons of Thunder

James and John. James and John were brothers. Remember, they were called the Sons of Thunder. And they were walking along one day, and they said, "Lord, shall we call down fire on these people?" And Jesus said — "Ah, here we go again" — "You don't know what manner of spirit you are of, to do that. I didn't come to destroy men's lives; I came to save them."

c. Peter — Matthew 16

I think the key person that needed patience from Jesus was Peter. Peter. Jesus said, "Who do men say that I am?" And they told Him — Jeremiah, and prophets, whatever. He said, "Now, but who do you say that I am?" And Peter, speaking for the group, I think, said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus said, "Whoa — that's great, Peter. You didn't learn that. Flesh and blood didn't tell you that. My Father in heaven told you that. It doesn't come from you personally. That's great, Peter. Did a great job."

And then Jesus began — right there, in that same section — Jesus began to tell them that He had to go to Jerusalem, He had to suffer many things, and He had to die. And Peter said, "Lord, far be it from You; that can never happen to You!" And Jesus said, "Oh, my good friend Peter — get back a little bit." No, no, that's not what He said. He said, "Get behind Me, Satan!" This guy had the answer to who You are: You're the Christ, the Son of the living God. "Satan, get behind Me." Because he went from being told from heaven the answer to a question, to being told from Satan. Resist that. Don't let him do that.

And what did Jesus say? Jesus put him back there, but He still had patience with all these people — patience till He could get the job done. That's what the Lord will give us. The Lord will give us the love of God for people. He'll also give us the patience to work with people. That's what we need to get that job done — to get the good news passed on to sinful men.

So we need to wait on the Lord. Talk to the Lord. Wait on Him. Get His picture of things. Get the directions straight, and then go.

II. Wait for the Lord — 3:6–12

Then we also need to wait for the Lord. And while we're waiting for the Lord — verses 6 through 12 — he says —

A. The Exhortation — 3:6

1. Its Source — 3:6a

He gives an exhortation, verse 6. And before I get to the exhortation, let me tell you where it came from — or you can see it: “we command you.” Paul — and maybe Silas and Timothy — “we command you.” And “we command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” There's no other name, no greater name, than the name of Jesus. “We command you in Jesus' name.” It's just as though Jesus were standing right here telling you to do this. We use Jesus' name.

And according to our previous teaching. Now, his previous teaching was the Word of God. Whatever he said — He told me, “The words I speak to you, they are truth, they are life.” These are words of God. Now, so he's saying, “I have a command for you. It's a very important command.” Then the name — Jesus, the highest authority — and the previous teaching, the Word of God. All of that — that's the source.

From the outline: The “previous teaching” would include all they had taught at Thessalonica and the first epistle.

2. Its Severity — 3:6b

a. *The Order* — “*withdraw*”

But now the severity of it, verse 6b. He says the order is: keep away from, or stand aloof from, or avoid.

b. *The Offender* — “*from every brother*”

Those people who don't work — who will not work. The brothers: any brother who will not work. Not talking “cannot work”; talking about he refuses to work. He's lazy; he's a loafer.

c. *The Offense* — “*who walks disorderly*”

He “walks disorderly,” he says. That's the one who walks disorderly. And it refers to this particular sin, which he's going to describe later. It's not just not working, but he'll talk about that a little later. But he says that that's the exhortation: separate yourself from this disorderly person who will not work.

B. The Example — 3:7–9

1. His Integrity — 3:7

Now, the example, verses 7 to 9. He talks about himself: “Look at me.” That Paul can do that! “Look at me. Follow what I say.” And here it is, verse 7: “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you” — meaning we did not eat your bread.

See, Paul's going to offer himself, then — and his team, of course — as a positive example. Here's what not to do, and this is how this sin can be avoided. They were not guilty of this sinful action, is what he's saying. And he was not saying, "Don't do as I do; do as I say." Not that. He was saying, rather, "Do as I do, because I do as I say."

Now, "Be followers of me," he says in 1 Corinthians 11. He says, "Be followers of me, as I also am of Christ." That's the key. "Be followers of me. Look at what I do, and follow me, and do what I do — only as I follow Christ." So that's his integrity: "Look at me. I'm telling you what to do, and I have given you examples of my life."

2. His Industry — 3:8

Now, his industry. Here's what it means — verse 8: "nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you." See, this was Paul's custom. When he went into a town, he didn't take anything from those people that he was ministering to. Now, he would take from others — the Philippians sent to him two or three times, remember — and he would take that money and do his ministry. But he wouldn't take money from the Corinthians to minister to the Corinthians, or from the Thessalonians to minister to them. So he's saying, "That's what we do. We're not going to take anything from you while we're ministering to you."

"Forgive Me This Wrong!" — 2 Corinthians 12:13

And then he defended his apostleship in Corinth, reminding them of all the miracles he had done. And then he further said, "For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches" — all the miracles he did, everything he did there; then how were you inferior? And he says, oh, there's only one thing — "except that I myself was not burdensome to you?" And then — you should have been here last night; I laughed out loud when I saw this, because I've seen it before — but he says, "I was not burdensome to you. Forgive me this wrong!" Forgive me this unrighteous act. I didn't burden you! Paul was fastidious about this whole thing. "Forgive me this wrong." So what he's saying is, "Follow me." This is his industry — how hard he worked.

| **From the outline:** "Forgive me this wrong!" — *adikian* = unrighteousness.

3. His Intention — 3:9

And then his intention, verse 9. He said, "not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us." That's why he did it.

You see, there's a flip side to this whole thing. He would fight to the bitter end to make sure you understand you ought to give to those who are doing the ministry. The flip side is in 1 Corinthians 9:3–12. You can look at that sometime. And there's a key — back to Ryrie. He wrote a book, *Balancing the Christian Life*. Don't take money from people you're ministering with, but make sure you understand they have the right to do this. And boy, in 1 Corinthians 9 he lays it out. There's a right for that.

4. His Intimation — 3:10

So — his intimation: “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.” It’s already stated. See, it’s not a question of one who cannot work, again. It is the one who will not work. Work’s available; he will not do it. So he’s reminding them that when he taught before — “before, when I was with you, I taught that.” And this may be a summary of all the important points that are there.

He said — that’s not the complete story. See? You now remember “the rest of the story.” Well, here’s the rest of the story.

C. The Explanation — 3:11

He’s already given the exhortation, the example. Now the explanation. Why is it so important that this person not loaf around? Well — “For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.” Here’s the key: “but are busybodies.”

“We hear” — maybe from Timothy, or maybe people who came through Corinth and said, “How are things in Thessalonica?” “Well, here’s what’s happening.” Whatever — “we hear.” So he’s already said they’re not working, and apparently they’re able to work. But the bigger problem is that these people are having too much time on their hands, and they’re spending that time meddling in the business of other people — not knowing what they’re doing, not knowing what they’re saying. “Oh, I always have an opinion of what this person did or that person did.” No, not good. There’s a meddler — this gossip. They were, instead, taking the spare time and going around and interrupting other people who are actually working.

Study Note — “Disorderly” and “Busybodies”

“Disorderly” (*ataktōs*, 3:6, 11) was originally a military word for a soldier out of rank; Paul had already warned “those who are unruly” (*ataktous*) in 1 Thessalonians 5:14. Verse 11 contains a pun that English can only approximate: “not busy at work (*ergazomenous*), but busybodies (*periergazomenous*).” Many commentators connect the idleness to the prophetic confusion of chapter 2 — some may have stopped working because they thought the end had already come — though the text itself stresses, as the teacher does, the meddling that idleness produced.

The discipline Paul commands is directed at a “brother” (3:6, 15). It concerns fellowship in the church, not the man’s eternal life; the aim, as the next study shows, is that he be ashamed and restored.

Sources (FGR): Constable, Expository Notes on 2 Thessalonians; Walvoord and Zuck, eds., The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament; Charles R. Swindoll, Insights on 1 & 2 Thessalonians (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2022).

D. The Solution — 3:12

So what’s the solution? Verse 12: “Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.” So it’s basically what he said before, you know — “that you also aspire to lead a

quiet life.” This is 1 Thessalonians chapter 4: “that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.”

So he’d already commanded them while he was there. He wrote it in 1 Thessalonians 4. Now he’s writing it again in 2 Thessalonians. So he told them in person, he wrote it in the first epistle, and now he’s writing it again. And Jesus said, in the mouth of two or three witnesses let every word be established. There’s three witnesses right there.

“Eat What’s Put Before You and Let It Stop Your Mouth”

So — my mother had a saying. I don’t think she was thinking about 2 Thessalonians, but — let’s talk about eating. She said, speaking to her six children in the middle of the Depression — when we would say, “What’s for supper? I don’t like that” — that kind of thing you get from six kids — and she would say, “Eat what’s put before you, and let it stop your mouth.”

I think that summarizes what we’ve been saying. And she wasn’t mean about it. She’d kind of have a little smile on her face, but she meant it: “Eat what’s put before you. Let it stop your mouth.” I learned to do that, after a while. So Paul, I think, was very proud of my mom. I wonder if he’s met her yet. It’ll be his privilege, I tell you, if he does.

Conclusion: Trust and Obey

The book of Ecclesiastes talks about life. And his big thing — his conclusion — is, “All is vanity. Nothing but vanity.” And then he sums up the whole book by saying this: “What is the conclusion of the matter?” — next to the last verse — “Fear God and keep His commandments.” Fear God — pray, trust God — and keep His commandments: obey. Trust and obey. “For there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”

Lord, this is Your Word. They’re Your people.

④ SELF-STUDY GUIDE

For use during the group meeting · Focused on the commentary text

Greek Word Study — 2 Thessalonians 3:1–12

Grammar and parsing: Blue Letter Bible. Definitions cite only the sources that add clarity (STR · THAY · VINE), with significance in context for every word.

Verse	Greek Word / English	Strong's # / Translit. / Form	Definition & Significance
v.1	προσεύχομαι <i>pray</i>	G4336 <i>proseuchomai</i> Verb — Pres. Mid. Imp. 2nd Pl.	STR: to pray to God. Present imperative: keep on praying. Significance: Paul, who constantly prays for them, now asks prayer for himself and his team — leaders need prayer.
v.1	τρέχω <i>run swiftly</i>	G5143 <i>trechō</i> Verb — Pres. Act. Subj. 3rd Sg.	THAY: to run; metaphorically, to advance rapidly. Significance: not an Olympic race but swift progress — the Word runs only as fast as we carry it.
v.2	ῥύομαι <i>delivered</i>	G4506 <i>rhyomai</i> Verb — Aor. Pass. Subj. 1st Pl.	STR: to rush or draw to oneself; rescue. Significance: deliverance of the messengers from those who oppose the free gift.
v.2	ἄτοπος <i>unreasonable</i>	G824 <i>atopos</i> Adjective — Gen. Masc. Pl.	THAY: lit. “out of place”; improper, wicked (cf. Luke 23:41). Significance: men out of place in God’s creation, opposing God’s people.
v.3	πιστός <i>faithful</i>	G4103 <i>pistos</i> Adjective — Nom. Masc. Sg.	THAY: trustworthy, reliable. Significance: a play on v.2 — “not all have faith (pistis); but the Lord is faithful (pistos).”
v.3	πονηρός <i>the evil one</i>	G4190 <i>ponēros</i> Adjective (subst.) — Gen. Masc./Neut. Sg.	VINE: evil in active opposition to good, harmful. The form can be “the evil one” or “evil.” Significance: probably both — Satan is behind all evil.
v.3	φυλάσσω <i>guard</i>	G5442 <i>phylassō</i> Verb — Fut. Act. Ind. 3rd Sg.	STR: to watch, keep, protect. Significance: the faithful Lord stands guard over His people.
v.5	κατευθύνω <i>direct</i>	G2720 <i>kateuthynō</i> Verb — Aor. Act. Opt. 3rd Sg.	THAY: to make straight, guide (cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:11; Luke 1:79). Significance: the Lord clears the path for our hearts into God’s love and Christ’s patience.

Verse	Greek Word / English	Strong's # / Translit. / Form	Definition & Significance
v.6	στέλλω <i>withdraw</i>	G4724 <i>stellō</i> Verb — Pres. Mid. Inf.	STR: to keep away from, avoid (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:20). Significance: keep away, stand aloof — a measured withdrawal of fellowship from a disobedient brother.
v.6	ἀτάκτως <i>disorderly</i>	G814 <i>ataktōs</i> Adverb	THAY: out of rank, irregularly — originally a military term (cf. ataktous, “unruly,” 1 Thessalonians 5:14). Significance: one who will not work and breaks ranks with the church.
v.7	μιμέομαι <i>follow (imitate)</i>	G3401 <i>mimeomai</i> Verb — Pres. Mid. Inf.	STR: to imitate. Significance: “do as I do, because I do as I say” (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1).
v.9	ἐξουσία <i>authority</i>	G1849 <i>exousia</i> Noun — Acc. Fem. Sg.	STR: right, authority. Significance: Paul had the right to support (1 Corinthians 9:3–12) but laid it aside to set an example.
v.11	περιεργάζομαι <i>busybodies</i>	G4020 <i>periergazomai</i> Verb — Pres. Mid. Ptc. Acc. Masc. Pl.	THAY: to bustle about uselessly, meddle. A pun on ergazomai: “not busy, but busybodies.” Significance: idleness turned into meddling and gossip.
v.12	ἡσυχία <i>quietness</i>	G2271 <i>hēsychia</i> Noun — Gen. Fem. Sg.	STR: stillness, quietness. Significance: “work in quietness” — the same command given in person and in 1 Thessalonians 4:11.

Grammar Abbreviation Key

Cases: Nom. · Gen. · Dat. · Acc. · Voc. | Number: Sg. · Pl. | Gender: Masc. · Fem. · Neut.

Verb Mood: Ind. · Imp. · Subj. · Opt. · Inf. · Ptc. | Tense: Pres. · Imperf. · Fut. · Aor. · Perf. · Plpf. | Voice: Act. · Mid. · Pass. | Person: 1st/2nd/3rd Sg./Pl.

Hebrew Word Study: not included this week. Ecclesiastes 12:13 is cited for its content in translation; no Hebrew term is a developed point of the message.

Study Questions

Part 1 — From the Commentary

Outline Point	Key Truth
Introduction	What do you do while you're waiting? The Lord is coming; we serve while we wait.
I.A Content of the prayer — 3:1–2	That the Word may run (we put legs under our prayers) and be glorified (believed and prized); that the messengers be delivered from men “out of place and actively harmful,” for not all have faith.

Outline Point	Key Truth
I.B Confidence in the prayer — 3:3–4	The Lord is faithful: He will establish you (stand on the promises, not sit on the premises), protect you from the evil one, and you will keep doing what was commanded.
I.C Consequences of the prayer — 3:5	The Lord directs hearts into the love of God (to love the unlovely) and the patience of Christ (Philip, James and John, Peter).
II.A The exhortation — 3:6	In Jesus' name, withdraw from the brother who walks disorderly — the one who will not (not cannot) work.
II.B The example — 3:7–9	Paul's integrity, industry, and intention: he worked night and day, laid aside his right to support, and could say, "Do as I do."
II.C–D Explanation and solution — 3:10–12	"If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." Idlers had become busybodies; the solution is to work quietly and eat their own bread — told in person, in the first letter, and now again.

Part 2 — Study Questions

1. What does it mean for the Word to "run" and to be "glorified," and how can we help it run where we cannot go?

Leader answer: The Word can't run by itself — it has no feet; it runs as fast as we carry it, so we put legs under our prayers. It is glorified when people believe it and prize it above every other book (the Bible on top of the stack). Where we can't go, we go by giving and prayer — as the church does through its missions giving.

2. Why does Paul add "for not all have faith" (3:2)?

Leader answer: Because in our own little group, where everyone agrees, we can forget that out there many reject the Word and oppose both the free gift and those who offer it. Paul and his team faced men "out of place" and actively harmful, and needed prayer to handle them. Satan doesn't bother those who don't bother him — so let's start bothering him.

3. What three things does the faithful Lord do, according to 3:3–4?

Leader answer: He establishes us — causing us to stand on the promises, strengthened in the faith as we study His Book (Ryrie's question: could you lead a dying man to the Lord?). He guards us from the evil one and from evil. And He gives Paul confidence that they are doing and will continue to do what was commanded — based on God's faithfulness and their past record.

4. How did Jesus show patience with His followers, and why do we need both God's love and Christ's patience?

Leader answer: With Philip ("Have I been with you so long?"), with James and John (who wanted to call down fire), and with Peter (who went from a revelation of the Father to "Get behind Me, Satan"). We need God's love to love unlovely people — even unlovely Christians — and Christ's patience to keep working with people until the job of passing on the good news gets done.

5. What was the real problem with those who would not work, and how did Paul's example answer it?

Leader answer: They were able to work but would not, and the bigger problem was that they used their spare time as busybodies — meddling and gossiping, interrupting others who were working. Paul answered with his own example: he worked night and day so as not to be a burden, even laying aside his right to support, so he could say, “Do as I do, because I do as I say.”

Part 3 — Passage Summary

Verse	Phrase	Summary
3:1	“pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly”	Pray for the Word's progress and glory.
3:2	“delivered from unreasonable and wicked men”	Pray for the messengers' deliverance; not all have faith.
3:3	“But the Lord is faithful”	He establishes and guards His people.
3:4	“you do and will do the things we command”	Confidence based on God's faithfulness and their record.
3:5	“into the love of God and into the patience of Christ”	The Lord directs hearts to love and patience.
3:6	“withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly”	Commanded in Jesus' name, according to apostolic teaching.
3:7–9	“to make ourselves an example”	Paul worked night and day and laid aside his right to support.
3:10–12	“If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat”	Idlers become busybodies; work quietly and eat your own bread.

⑤ APPLICATION

Closes the study · personal & corporate

1. Put Legs Under Your Prayers

2 Thessalonians 3:1 — “that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified.”

Source: ③ Commentary, I.A.1.

The Bible has no feet. It runs only as fast as we carry it. Jesus commanded, “Go into all the world,” and few of us have been to the whole world — but every one of us can go by giving and prayer. Missions giving and missions praying put us on the field.

Reflection: *How is your giving and praying helping the Word run beyond your own town?*

Practical Step: Choose one missionary your church supports and pray for them by name every day this week.

2. Stand on the Promises

2 Thessalonians 3:3 — “But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.”

Source: ③ Commentary, I.B.1–2; FGR — Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*.

God is faithful to establish us — to make us stand on the promises instead of sit on the premises — as we get into His Book at church and at home. Dr. Ryrie’s question still presses: if someone were dying beside the road and asked how to get to heaven, could you tell him? The gospel is simple — believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and receive eternal life — but we must know it well enough to give it.

Reflection: *Could you clearly explain to a dying man how to have eternal life?*

Practical Step: Write out a two-minute explanation of the gospel using John 3:16 and 6:47, and practice it aloud with someone.

3. Love the Unlovely, Patiently

2 Thessalonians 3:5 — “Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.”

Source: ③ Commentary, I.C; ② Devotional.

Some people are hard to love — and sometimes they are Christians. God’s answer is not to change them first, but to direct our hearts into His love and Christ’s patience. Jesus was patient with Philip, with James and John, and with Peter. He will give us the same love and patience to keep carrying the good news to sinful people.

Reflection: *Who is the hardest person for you to love right now?*

Practical Step: Pray daily this week for that person by name, and do one specific act of kindness for them.

4. Work Quietly While You Wait

2 Thessalonians 3:12 — “that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.”

Source: ③ Commentary, II.B–D.

Waiting for the Lord's return is no excuse for idleness. Idle hands turned the disorderly Thessalonians into busybodies, meddling in other people's business. Paul's answer was his own example of honest, steady work. Or, as the teacher's mother put it during the Depression: "Eat what's put before you, and let it stop your mouth."

Reflection: *Is there an area where you have opinions about others' business that you should keep to yourself?*

Practical Step: This week, when tempted to comment on someone else's affairs, turn that moment into a prayer for them instead.

End of Study · 2 Thessalonians 3:1–12