August 31, 2025 (Lesson 14)

LIVE WISELY IN CHRIST

1. **Stand Firm in the Gospel** (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17)
2. **Remain Faithful to God** (2 Thessalonians 3:1-5)
3. **Keep On Doing Good** (2 Thessalonians 3:6-18)

Central Truth: Through Christ, God has provided everything we need to live in victory.
Focus: Acknowledge and thank God for His keeping power.
Evangelism Emphasis: God has provided His Son, Jesus Christ, as the means of salvation for all who will believe in Him.
Golden Text: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

Christianity is not for the weak-kneed or faint-hearted. Living between two ages—this present evil age and the glorious age to come—can produce inward stress that affects mind, body, and soul. It requires people who know how to *stand strong* (be self-sufficient) and yet *yield* at the same time (be God-dependent). Christians must learn to be part of the process and still not get in the way of the process. This requires power from above lived out in a world that misunderstands, persecutes, and even hates us. Yet, this power enables us to love unbelievers and pray for them. It not only takes God to become a Christian; it takes God to continue as a Christian.

The Apostle Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy understood this as they traveled from city to city digging out churches and encouraging those churches they established. A church that remained dear to the heart of Paul was the Thessalonian congregation. This church had godly people and those who needed help becoming godly. The congregation produced in him great feelings of pride and concern at the same time.

In the last half of his second letter to them, the congregation received a reminder of the phenomenal process that made them inhabitants of the kingdom of God and their responsibility to that process. They were encouraged, prayed for, challenged, and directed. All of them received praise; some of them received correction. Paul's desire was that they all be prepared for the soon return of Jesus Christ.

The problems addressed in the congregation by Paul remind us "there is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9 NKJV). Most of the problems seen in the pages of the New Testament are still seen today. They may take on different attire, but the core is still the same. Positively, this reminds us the same Jesus who defeated Satan and made an open show of him (Col. 2:15) is still able to defeat Satan through us. We must stand firm in the provision of God, bear one another's burdens, and serve God with everything He gives us.

1. STAND FIRM IN THE GOSPEL

A. Stand Firm in Your Standing (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When the faithful and persevering Thessalonians were contrasted with those who were deluded, lawless, and rejecters of God's gracious provision (vv. 1-12), the only appropriate response was thanksgiving to God. Paul's language in verse 13 leaves no doubt about what he thought of the congregation. They were the family of God, greatly loved by the Lord, both in the past and continuing on in the present and future. They had been chosen by God "from the beginning" of time. Their salvation was in the eternal plan of God, not an afterthought.

Two aspects of salvation are highlighted in this verse. First, the Thessalonians were saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, making them holy before God (see 1 Peter 1:2). Paul emphasized the cooperative work of the Trinity in salvation: God the Father developed the plan of salvation; God the Son carried out the plan on the cross; God the Holy Spirit applies the benefits to our lives. Second, Paul reminded them of their part in the salvation process ("belief of the truth"). The Thessalonians exercised their faith in the divinely revealed truth of God.

Just as Paul reminded the Thessalonian church of their salvation experience, so we should reflect on where God has brought us from and be aware of the state of those still caught in the grip of sin. It not only will encourage us to stand firm in our faith, but also motivate us to intercession and evangelism.

In verse 14, Paul reminded the church how God had invited ("called") them to respond to His gracious offer of salvation through the preaching of the Word. They could have rejected that invitation as others had, but they made the conscious decision to respond to the Gospel. "Our gospel" indicates Paul had integrated the good news into his life. It was so much a part of his identity that his passion about the Gospel overflowed. "Our gospel" also stresses his personal concern for the congregation's health and success. He was not, however, distinguishing his message from that of the other apostles and preachers who proclaimed the Word.

The end result of the salvation process is receiving the gift of "the glory." This gift has a present and future aspect. As Christians, we have this glory now, but look forward to further glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. It is not just any glory, but "the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 14). In Scripture, *glory* indicates that which emanates beauty, majesty, and splendor (1 Chron. 22:5). It is the manifestation of God's presence and power (Ex. 33:22), which serves as a covering of protection for His people (Isa. 4:5). Glory also is associated with the future reign of the risen Son of Man (Matt. 25:31).

Believers participating in this glory are transformed into the beauty of God's new creation. We become God's precious treasure to protect and preserve. We enter into a new realm that allows us to participate in the Kingdom (rule and reign of God) and look forward to the day when we shall be delivered from all the effects of sin in this world, are found in the likeness of Jesus Christ (1 John 3:2), and become a part of His glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

—What is the ultimate purpose of being "called" to salvation (v. 14)? How does the call go out?

B. Stand Firm in the Teaching (2 Thessalonians 2:15)

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

With the preceding verses in mind, the apostle encouragingly commanded the congregation to stand continually without wavering and keep on forcefully seizing the positive traditions which they were taught. He used military language to emphasize their need to "stand fast" continually. They could accomplish this by incorporating the doctrinal foundation (why we believe as we do) and ethical expression (how we are to live) of the teaching Paul had imparted to them, both in person and by letters. The language indicates they had been doing this. Paul encouraged them to continue on in the right pathway.

The first epistle (1:8-10) tells us the Thessalonians were faithful in spreading the Gospel. The "traditions" being handed down could be traced back to Jesus Christ himself and were consistent with the foundation laid in the Old Testament. This reminds us not all traditions are negative.

—What kind of traditions should the church hold on to? What kind of traditions should we let go of?

C. Stand Firm in Hope (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17)

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, 17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

As the apostle did in his first letter to the Thessalonians (3:11-13; 5:23), he breaks into sincere prayer that informs and encourages. Younger saints often learn the art of prayer from listening to others pray. Paul knew others would imitate him; in fact, he encouraged it (see 1 Cor. 11:1); therefore, he gave them a good example to follow. We are influencing people. The question is, how are we influencing them?

In 2 Thessalonians 2:16, Paul lifts up "our Lord Jesus Christ." This emphasizes His superiority to the man of lawlessness and the force that drives him (vv. 1-12). It also reinforces the unique place of Jesus. He is "Lord," the term used in the Old Testament to translate *Yahweh*, the divine name. He is "Jesus," the One who took on flesh, felt what we feel, suffered and died for our sake. He is also "Christ," the *Anointed One*, or the *Messiah*—the promised One of God who fulfills all the redemptive promises of God.

Christ's ability and function in securing the necessary provision for believers is emphasized here ("himself"). However, Paul is not making a sharp distinction between the Father and Son. Rather, he notes their unity and cooperation in the concrete expression of love and provision. That expression includes encouragement that provides strength ("everlasting consolation") and real hope that endures, both of which come on the basis of the gift of God to us in spite of us ("through grace").

Verse 17 continues the prayer and expresses Paul's desire that the Thessalonians receive strengthening encouragement from Christ. Paul was asking for divine presence to come alongside them, grasp them by the arm and lead them through their difficulties. He also prayed that they might be firmly fixed (established) in all they would say and do.

The Necessity of Hope

To live without hope is to cease to live. Hell is hopelessness. It is no accident that above the entrance to Dante's depiction of hell is the inscription: "Leave behind all hope, you who enter here."—Fyodor Dostoyevsky

2. REMAIN FAITHFUL TO GOD

A. Call for Intercession (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2)

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: 2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

Coming to the end of the letter, Paul instructed the Thessalonians to intercede for him and his coworkers (v. 1). Prayer had been emphasized throughout both letters. Here, two petitions in particular are included. The first concerns the reception of "the word of the Lord" (preaching of the Gospel). Paul desired that it would progress freely and rapidly. The prayers of the Thessalonians were needed to help in the spiritual warfare. He wanted the message to be *esteemed* ("glorified") in others, just as it had in the Thessalonian congregation. There is an emphasis on the freedom and effectiveness of the Word going forth continually. Paul was looking for long-term spiritual success.

The second aspect of prayer Paul requested was deliverance with power "from unreasonable and wicked men" (v. 2). Apparently he had a particular situation in mind, perhaps one of which the Thessalonians were aware. Paul's opponents were "unreasonable"—literally, *wrong-minded*. They were in opposition because they did not believe in Jesus Christ. They were human instruments of Satan.

World-Changing Intercession

"Missionaries don't seem to be what they used to be," bemoaned a speaker. "Take William Carey, for instance. He changed the history of India."

The speaker then talked of Carey's sister, who lay paralyzed in bed for fifty years and could not even articulate her words most of the time. Propped up in bed, she wrote lengthy letters of encouragement to Carey and prayed continuously for him.

If we do not have missionaries like Carey today, it may be because they do not have prayer helpers like Carey's sister.—*Knight's Illustrations*

B. Confidence in the Lord (2 Thessalonians 3:3-5)

3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. 5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

All prayer is founded on the faithfulness of God. Paul emphasized this truth by noting the Lord *has been*, *is*, and *always will be* "faithful" (v. 3). Paul was confident God would deliver him from those opposing him, and also firmly *fix* ("stablish") and put a hedge of protection around the congregation to guard them from Satan. The congregation was precious to the Lord; therefore, He would protect them as they walked in His will. The continued obedience and sincerity of the Thessalonians was crucial to their well-being (v. 4). Paul was confident they would continue to be obedient to the Lord.

Verse 5 expresses the hope of all intercession—guidance in the character and provision of God. When we intercede on behalf of others, they may have issues and problems of which we are not aware. However, if our prayer focuses on proper direction for their lives, we can trust "the Lord" (Jesus) to straighten their path and guide them in the right way.

The word *hearts*, as it does throughout the Thessalonian letters, refers to the entire inner person. The body follows the direction of the heart (Matt. 15:18). So, Paul wisely prayed their hearts would be directed (or redirected, if necessary) "into the love of God." This could be a reference to the love God had for the Thessalonians or to the love they had for Him. The same is true of the "steadfastness of Christ" (NASB)—the patient endurance Christ has or the patient endurance that comes from Him. It is taken here as an intentional reference to both the character and provision of God and Christ.

Christ exhibited perseverance as He endured the suffering, shame, and pain of the cross. Because He endured, we can receive His provision and endure until we see Him face-to-face (Heb. 4:15-16; 12:2-3).

—*As we pray for others, why must we have "confidence in the Lord" (v. 4)?*

3. KEEP ON DOING GOOD

A. Diligent Discipline (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15)

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

Paul addressed the need for the congregation to discipline the disorderly among them. Discipline is always administered in love and has restoration as its goal.

The type of person described here was choosing to live contrary to the teachings handed down and the examples provided. This was not someone who had been overtaken by a sin and repented. Neither was it someone who struggled in a particular area and occasionally failed, but then was sorrowful and repentant. The offenses Paul had in mind are found in the following sections of this lesson. Verse 6 introduces the subject, the offenses are discussed in verses 8-13, while verses 14 and 15 bring the discussion to a close and reinforce what the apostle had commanded. He did not command this on his authority, but "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 6).

Paul instructed them to "withdraw" (v. 6) and "have no company with" (v. 14) others in the congregation who were ignoring his instruction. The term translated "withdraw" was used to denote the rolling up of a sail and had reference to two aspects of discipline: (1) *guard yourself against* such a person, or do not allow the person's lifestyle to negatively influence your own; and (2) *refrain from intimate fellowship with* such a person. These ideas are reinforced by verses 14 and 15, where Paul said the person was not to be treated "as an enemy," but warned and instructed (admonished) "as a brother." The goal of this treatment was that the individual would realize the loss of fellowship, turn around because of shame, and be restored to proper conduct and meaningful fellowship.

Loose Strings

We must face the fact that many today are notoriously careless in their living. This attitude finds its way into the church. We have liberty, we have money, we live in comparative luxury. As a result,

discipline practically has disappeared. What would a violin solo sound like if the strings on the musician's instrument were all hanging loose, not stretched tight, not "disciplined"?—A. W. Tozer

B. Diligent Living (2 Thessalonians 3:7-13, 16-18)

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. 13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

The congregation is reminded of the positive example provided by Paul and his coworkers while they were in Thessalonica (v. 7). His example was one of willing sacrifice and strenuous work (v. 8). "Bread" refers to meals and to the work necessary to provide the food. The ministry trio had not depended on the Thessalonians for their means of income, but rather paid their own way. Paul was blazing a trail where there had been no trail before; therefore, he was careful to keep ministry from being associated with money. This example and language served as a powerful rebuke against those who were not living as they should.

When Paul was with the Thessalonians, he had emphasized the congregation had no responsibility to take care of the lazy or unmotivated. Hunger and need can be very effective motivation to earn a living (v. 10). However, Paul said he was continuing to hear there were those who were undisciplined and unruly ("disorderly"), not earning any kind of living, but rather were "busybodies" (v. 11). Some people always want to solve everyone else's problems, but never seem to acknowledge or work on their own lives. They have advice for every problem and person, but cannot live by their own counsel.

Paul's order and encouragement ("command and exhort") to such persons came through apostolic authority derived from the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 12). It was given in order that they may learn to work in silence and earn their own living. His command was as much—if not more—for the benefit of those who were undisciplined as it was to render relief to the congregation, and was designed to bring reconciliation and resolution to the problem.

The congregation also received a reminder and a warm word of encouragement (v. 13). The apostle instructed, "Never get tired of doing good" (NLT). Paul was making sure they did not fall victim to one of Satan's snares. He did not want them to wonder why they should care or try. That is not a question Christians can entertain. With what God has and continues to invest in us, we can do nothing less than press on, for the best is yet to come.

Paul appropriately closed this letter with a prayer for peace (v. 16). He prayed the "Lord of peace" would give to the Thessalonians peace at all times and in every way. They needed peace with God, peace with their own conscience, and peace with one another. Paul also prayed the Lord would be "with [them] all." Where God's presence is manifested, there is peace.

—*Explain the significance of the Apostle Paul's work ethic.*

LIVE WISELY

Jesus is coming again, and He's coming soon. How should we respond?

We should not pack our bags and sit on the nearest mountain peak and merely watch the sky. Nor should we get caught in the hype of those who try to pinpoint the time they think He will return. Instead, we should be busy developing our relationship with Christ and always laboring for His cause. We should live as if He will return today and work as if His returning is years away.

Daily Devotions

M. Wait on the Lord (Psalm 27:1-14)

T. Trust and Hope in God (Psalm 146:1-10)

W. Loved by the Lord (Jeremiah 31:1-3)

T. Abide in Christ's Love (John 15:9-17)

F. To Live Is Christ (Philippians 1:19-26)

S. Established in the Faith (Colossians 2:5-10)