

1. The Thessalonian Christians had been wrongly informed that the day of the Lord had already occurred. They were disturbed and unsettled. False doctrine always has that result. But Paul tells them (2:3-12) that the Day of the Lord will not come until there first comes the apostasy and the appearance of the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, the Antichrist. He is described at 2:3-12. The Lutheran Church has always rightly insisted that Paul is describing the Papacy of the Catholic Church. (Note the Papacy, not the membership). The Pope calls Himself "the Holy Father" a term used only once in the Bible at Jn. 17:11 of Jesus to the Father. He insists that He is Christ's substitute on earth. After Luther's death the Council of Trent cursed the teaching of justification by faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Paul comforts the distressed and unsettled Thessalonians at 2:13-14 with the teaching of election. I am God's child now because God from eternity chose me in Christ. Through the Gospel the Holy Spirit gave me the faith to believe in this gracious God. Paul assures the Thessalonian Christians that their Lord Jesus will give them eternal glory when they die. Then in vs. 15 he urges them to stand fast in and cling heartily to what he has taught them. He ends chapter 2 with a prayer that our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who have already given us eternal consolation and good hope by grace, may console their hearts and make them firm in every beneficial work and word. It is at this point at which our text begins.
3. Paul begins with the word "finally." He had directed his full attention to their needs in chapter 2. Now, finally, he asks that they pray for him. Paul admits that he cannot do it alone. Without the Lord's blessing he will surely fail. But it is not a personal request. He asks them to pray for the success of the Word of God, that it might run well and be well spoken of as had been the case in Thessalonica. Paul evidently has Ps. 147:15 in mind: "His Word runs very swiftly."
4. First Paul asked that the Christians pray for the success of the Word. Then in vs. 2 he asks that the Christians pray for Paul and his co-workers. He asks that they be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. Christians often must deal with unreasonable and wicked men. Both the world and false teachers preach, teach and live unreasonable and wicked teachings and deeds. Oh Lord, deliver us from the wicked one! Then Paul says: "You see, not all have faith." An understatement which means: "Very few have faith."
5. Then a sudden contrast: "But the Lord is faithful." In our sermon notes on I Cor. 10:1-12 we listed the many references to this thought in the NT. The Lord always does what He promises, especially "He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I Jn. 1:9. Vs. 3 of our text tells us that in His faithfulness the Lord will establish us (make us stand firm) and protect us from the Evil One. Oh how we need that!
6. Paul had confidence in his teaching and in his hearers. He says in vs. 4: "We are confident in the Lord with reference to you that what we teach you, you are doing and will do." Notice he says "in the Lord." An ancient commentator said here: "Trust no man by himself." Right. Men can and do err. Only God can make a man faithful. God's faithfulness came to the Thessalonians through Paul.
7. Paul closes our text in vs. 5 with a thought-provoking prayer: "May the Lord guide your hearts (your inmost being and entire personality) in the love which God gives (the Gospel) and the endurance which Christ gives." The Thessalonians had become restless and unsettled because false teachers had given them wrong information. Paul gently led them back to reality and the truth. He commends them to God who will guide them with His Gospel, the forgiveness of sins, and give them the strength to endure adversity. That is what all of us need very much.

## Sermon Outline on II Thess. 3:1-5, Palm Sunday

Theme: PASTOR AND PEOPLE LOVE EACH OTHER

Introduction: It is well-known that Paul went to many places in Asia Minor and the Mediterranean world establishing Christian congregations. After he left he often wrote letters to them. And often he returned to strengthen them and answer their questions. Each congregation had its own particular problems. But he always used the Gospel, the good news of the forgiveness of sins, to heal their wounds and quiet their fears. We turn our attention in particular to Thessalonica.

### I-The Pastor Loves The People

- A-He quiets their fears. After Paul had done his initial mission work in Thessalonica false teachers came to them and told them that the day of the Lord had already occurred. That is absurd. If the day of the Lord had already occurred the world would no longer be standing. But, in their fear, the Thessalonians thought only of having been left behind. Paul told them in this letter (chapter 2) that the day of the Lord would not come until the great apostasy occurs first and that man of sin and lawlessness would come. Paul was not only teaching those people but also us. Then Paul, in 2:13-14, assures the Thessalonians, that nothing can hurt them because God chose them by grace in Christ Jesus to be His own. He has sanctified them with the Holy Spirit and purified their faith with the truth. And they have the prospect of everlasting life. In this way Paul quiets their fears.
- B-He encourages them. In 2:15 he urges them to stand fast and to cling to what Paul has taught them. In vs. 3 of our text Paul assures them that God is faithful, that He will establish them and guard them from the evil one, the devil. This is beautiful Gospel.
- C-He has confidence in them. In vs. 4 of our text Paul says: "We have confidence in the Lord with reference to you that you are doing and will do what we teach you." A teacher who has no confidence in his students does not love them. Paul proved his love here.
- D-He prays for them. Read vs. 16 and 17 of chapter 2, a beautiful prayer. He says, in effect, "May the Father and the Son Who have granted us everlasting life and hope comfort and establish your hearts now in every good deed and word." Read also vs. 5 of our text. The thought is very similar to the previous thought.

### II-The People Love Their Pastor

- A-They are not afraid to tell him their troubles. That is a good sign of a good relationship. If children are loved they feel free to bring their problems to their parents. If parishioners are loved and love their pastor they bring their fears to him. The Thessalonians had their fears about the day of the Lord. Paul quieted those fears.
- B-They pray for their pastor. Read vs. 1-2 of our text. At the moment Paul was facing many dangers in Athens and Corinth. Wherever he went, the unbelieving Jews followed him and tried to turn people against him. Furthermore, the pagan religion of the Greeks resisted and scorned the Word of God. Paul became despondent. See Acts 18:9-11. At I Cor. 2:3 he said: "I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling." Paul was not a man of iron. He was human as are all of us. In this case why did Paul ask them to pray for him?
  - 1-So that the Word of the Lord would run and be thought well of. Vs. 1. Any missionary needs that. Sometimes days pass without anyone listening to the missionary. That causes grief.
  - 2-So that they would be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. Vs. 2. We soon learn when we go out to do mission work that people use Satan's might and tricks to impede the Word. At such a time the missionary needs the whole armor of God which Paul describes at Eph. 6:10-17.

Conclusion: Our text is a good example of the mutual love of pastor and parishioners. Do we love each other?