



There's no season like Christmas. We're looking forward to incredible Christmas Eve services at the Pinnacle Hills Campus, so plan to be with us in the morning or evening on this day.

We've been walking through 2 Thessalonians in our Advent series. If you're not familiar with what Advent is, it is a time in the calendar around Christmas to anticipate the birth of Jesus but also look forward to His return. 2 Thessalonians is a perfect book to point our eyes toward Heaven and long for His return. Today, we'll consider how the love of God empowers us to confidently walk with Him through the difficult things we face in life because He is faithful and steadfast.

Key Passage: 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Discussion Questions:

1. Looking back at your notes, what encouraged or challenged you the most from the sermon?
2. How does Paul's request for prayer in verses 1-2 reflect the importance of spiritual support within the Christian community? How have you experienced this kind of support personally?

Paul is ultimately asking these Thessalonian Christians to pray for what only God can do: Make the word of the Lord the gospel speed ahead and be received by people. When it comes to seeing our friends and family come to faith in Christ, we need to remember that salvation is the work of God. This is a great prayer to pray as a church as we seek to do all that God has called us to do at Cross Church.

This prayer is a spiritual reminder that some oppose the gospel message. Paul asks the Thessalonians to pray that he and his team would be delivered from wicked and evil men as they seek to fulfill God's calling upon their lives. Similarly, expect the enemy's opposition whenever you decide to move forward spiritually. Whenever you choose to walk in purity, expect temptation. Whenever you decide to walk in generosity, expect financial challenges to arise.

3. In verse 3, Paul emphasizes the Lord's faithfulness. How can this assurance impact our perseverance when facing various challenges and uncertainties?

This needs to be common lingo in every Christian's life: "BUT...the Lord is faithful." The word "establish" means strengthening and making firm or stable. Does anybody sometimes just feel weak? Does anybody sometimes just feel like you can't resist temptation? God has strengthening power, the ability to make us firm and stable.

4. Reflect on the significance of being protected from the evil one, as mentioned in verse 3. How does this protection relate to our daily spiritual battles?

As you try to reach people with the hope of Jesus and encounter opposition from evil people, God Himself promises to be a military guardian over your life, protecting as only He can. Do not be afraid of opposition! Do not be fearful of those in your family who stand against you! Do not be fearful of those in your workplace who stand opposed to everything you stand for. God will protect you!

5. According to verse 4, why is confidence in the Lord crucial for faithful Christian living? How does this confidence influence your attitudes, actions, and relationships?

Paul is expressing confidence in these Thessalonian believers because they're living obedient to the commands of God, and they will continue to do so amid various trials.

6. Reflect on the concept of obedience in verse 4. How does obedience contribute to the spread of the gospel and the overall witness of the Christian community?
7. How does relying on God's love and steadfastness shape our hearts and direct us toward the way of Christ?

Paul ends this section of 2 Thessalonians with a prayer: "May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ." The word "direct" means to guide our steps and clear the obstacles in our path.

If God is anything, He is love. Out of all the things Paul could've prayed for these believers, one of them is that their hearts would be directed to understand the love of God. God loves us! This is such a simple, elementary statement of epic proportion! God loves you perfectly, based on His merit, not yours – how do we know this? Romans 5:8 says, "...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Furthermore, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of the steadfastness of Christ. Which means to "abide under." Paul calls the Thessalonians (and us) to submit to what God allows in your life – knowing that He is faithful. These things may include matters you would typically fight against, but Paul reminds us that we can submit to our life's circumstances knowing that Christ is steadfast and will bring good out of bad. Through it all, we can patiently wait for Christ.

8. What's one personal takeaway from today's study you can focus on this week?