

2 Thessalonians

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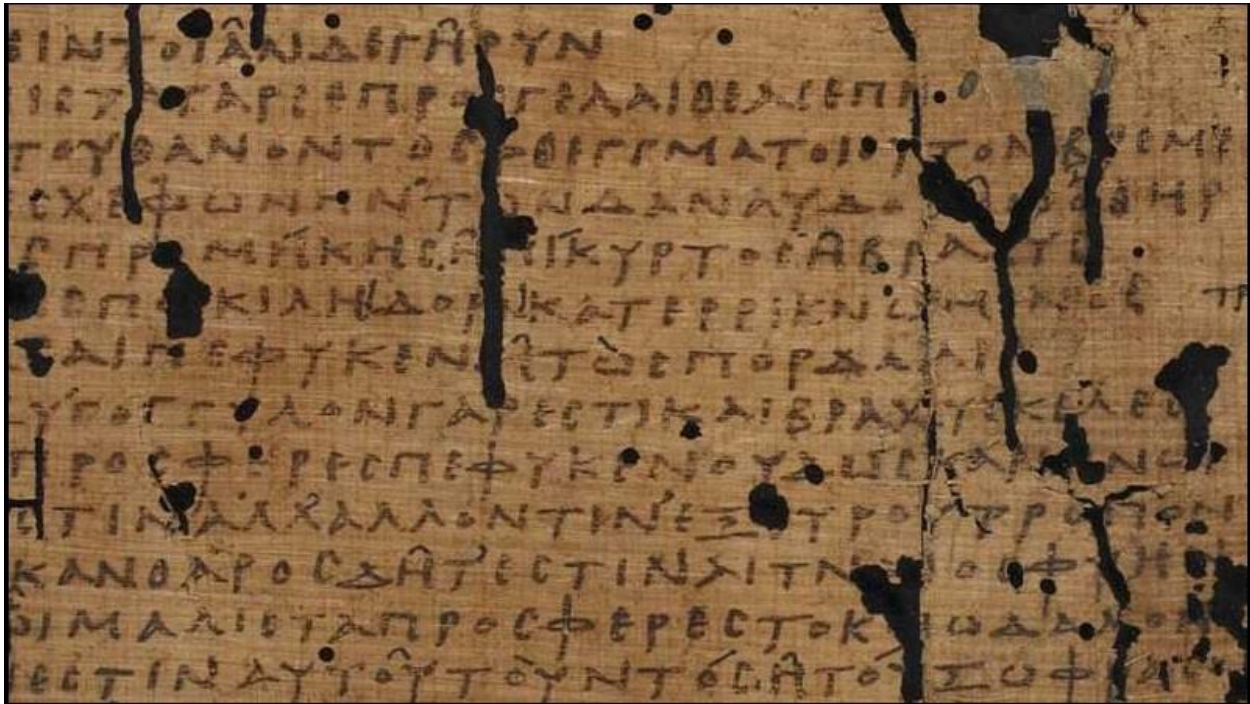
September 7, 2022



2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Vss. 1-2

- Paul shows his "preacherness" when he says "Finally" and then proceeds to give us fully 1/3 of the book. This is likely for two reasons. First, there was still space on the parchment. Parchment was expensive and not always readily accessible, so you never wanted to waste a space. Here is a random sample.



Second, there's no doubt that given unlimited parchment, Paul would have written volumes to the Thessalonians, so he was going to squeeze every drop of himself into his letters to them.

- Paul demonstrates both humility and genius by asking the Thessalonians to pray for him. First, a trap we all can fall into is in thinking that the Christian life is only for spiritual super heroes. We take a cursory look at Biblical characters like Paul and we say, "Well, I'm not a spiritual super hero like Paul. I can't live as he lived." What he shows here is his humanity and his vulnerability. Paul is in Corinth where the Jews and their allies are plotting to kill him. So yes, Paul needs the prayers of all the churches. Second, he shows his genius by getting the Thessalonians to look outward and not always inward. They were so concerned for themselves. "Are we good enough for heaven? Have we already missed the Second Coming?" Here Paul speaks without speaking. "Look outside yourselves. Pray for me and my situation. Pray that the people of Corinth will accept and embrace the word of God as you did. Pray that my friends and I will be kept safe from perverse and evil men."

Vs.3

- Yes, there is evil in the world. Evil is all around you and comes in many forms seeking to destroy you. But the Lord is faithful. And He is able. Like the classic song from The Veggie Tales, “God is Bigger Than the Boogie Man”.
- And what God does for His people is that through the Holy Spirit, He gives us strength to successfully battle the evil around us, strength to take the hits from Satan’s fiery darts and still stand. Further, the Holy Spirit is able to protect us from the evil one. Here on the Second Missionary Journey, the Jews soon drag Paul before the Roman proconsul, just as Jesus had been dragged before Pilate. The Jews were hoping for a similar outcome, but the judge released Paul because he saw this as simply a religious dispute (Acts 18:12-16). When Paul returned on the Third Missionary Journey, the Jews plotted to kill him as he was about to board a ship bound for Syria. Paul decided to return overland through Macedonia (Acts 20:1-3). In each case the Lord’s unseen hand *protected* Paul. Often it is not so much what the Lord does as what He doesn’t allow to be done!

Vs. 4

- Here again, Paul seeks to take the pressure off the Thessalonians who are so concerned about being good enough. Paul’s confidence is in *the Lord* not the Thessalonians. People are weak. On our own we can do nothing. But we can do ALL THINGS through Christ. And this is where Paul places his confidence.
- And what Paul is looking for is that the Thessalonians continue to do what Paul and his companions have instructed these new Christians to do. Love one another. Love your enemies. Pray for those who seek you harm and actually do good to them. On our own we might be able to love those who love us, but even pagans to do that, Jesus points out in the Sermon on the Mount. But sacrificially loving one another? And loving, praying for, and doing good to our enemies? No, on our own we are going to fail there. But we can do ALL THINGS through Christ.

Vs. 5

- Here is a prayer in two parts. “May the Lord direct your hearts *INTO* the love of God...”. Again, the Christian life is entirely about us being in God and God being in us. And it is the love of God where the power is found. As Paul told the people of Athens, “for in Him we live and move and exist...” (Acts 17:28a). *IN* Him. “May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.”
- “...and into the steadfastness of Christ.” One who is steadfast is one who is fixed in a certain direction, who is firm in their purpose, and who is unwavering, firmly fixed and established. This is a central quality of Jesus Christ as He walked on the earth. He would not allow the anger of the Jews, nor the power of the Romans, nor the pressures of family to keep Him from His goal. He would not allow the Jews to turn Him back to the legalism of their Law. He would not allow anyone or anything to shake Him. This is what Paul prays for the Thessalonians...and for us!