

## 2 Thessalonians

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Depending upon the Lord for his gracious help and direction, I venture to speak from the first verse in the third chapter, the second epistle to the Thessalonians.

The second epistle to the Thessalonians in chapter 3 and verse 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.

So, this is in a way the counterpart of the word that we had before us on today's evening and which has really remained with me since then.

We considered there in the first epistle to the Corinthians how the apostle was so deeply concerned lest he should hinder the gospel of Christ.

He was very willing to forego those things which he might well have otherwise enjoyed, which were perfectly lawful and proper for him to have, but he would forego them lest in any way he and those with him should hinder that sacred and precious and powerful gospel.

[ 1 : 49 ]     And so here he desires that the same gospel, the word of the Lord, may have free course, that it may not be hindered, but that it may freely run and be glorified.

I mentioned on the Lord's Day that there are dangers in our lives if we do profess the name of Christ.

There are dangers of our hindering the gospel in various ways by our conduct, and especially in the way that we appear before others, especially those in the world.

If our profession does not fit with our conduct, it is very soon noticed by those outside.

And as far as they are concerned, they do not want to hear a gospel that does not appear to have any effect on the lives of those that profess it.

[ 3 : 04 ]     And thus, in that sense, the gospel is hindered. People do not want to hear it. If they cannot see the effect of it in the lives of those who profess it.

But, of course, there are other ways in which the gospel may be hindered. It will be hindered if our own inward spiritual life is low and weak.

It will be hindered in us, and therefore it will be hindered as regards others, if that is the case. It could not really be otherwise.

If there is no spiritual exercise and desire within us, then our own spiritual life will become lean and feeble, and that will have such an effect upon everything that we do, that the gospel of Christ must be hindered by any such decline.

This was a very lively church, Bethesda Benica. And as we read in the first epistle, the apostles so rejoiced because, he said, the word of God sounded out from them.

[ 4 : 43 ]     They were so lively in their own souls, and so also concerned about the souls of those around them, that there was really a trumpeting forth of the gospel from that church.

So that, as the apostle said, he did not need to speak about them, because everybody knew about them. Wherever he went, he heard about the faith and the love of these Thessalonian believers.

And then also another thing, clearly, which may hinder the gospel, is the opposition, the outward opposition of evil men.

This the apostle was very conscious of, as he says, at once afterwards. He wanted the word of the Lord to have recourse. Pray for us, he said, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable, that is, perverse, and wicked men, for all men have not faith.

It appears from the word at the end of the epistle that this was written from Athens. And that there were there men who were very fond of human reason and logic.

[ 6 : 05 ] It was a place where philosophers had spent their time always talking about some new thing. They were very concerned with logical deductions, but it would seem as though their minds and their hearts were cold and hard.

And it was certainly never a very prosperous place for the gospel when the apostles went there. There were those unreasonable and wicked men who were a threat to the word of the Lord.

They would do all that they could to hinder the gospel of Christ. And, dear friends, it is so still. There are many in the world of a similar character today.

There are many who have really deeply impregnated in their minds some philosophy of life which is entirely opposite to the gospel.

We know that there are those philosophies and teachings like communism which have such a tremendous sway in the earth and so hold the minds of men and because of those views many nations are not really open to the gospel at all.

[ 7 : 45 ] It does not have this free course that the apostles so desired. Well, in this particular word we clearly have the situation the growing church, Thessalonica implied by this word even as it is with you and the spreading word of the Lord and also the praying company that were to support the apostle by their prayers and their exercise.

Well, first here then there is this growing church. The apostle very much commended this little new church at Thessalonica.

He'd only apparently been there some three or four weeks before the persecution raised was so intense that he was forced to leave them. And shortly after that he wrote the first epistle to that church and not very much later apparently this second epistle.

But I would think that in all the abyssals that we find in the New Testament there are no such glowing commendations as we find concerning this one.

of whom else as it says that their faith he says your faith groweth exceeding them and the charity and love of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth.

[ 9 : 27 ] Added to what I quoted from the first epistle this church was so highly commended of the apostle it wasn't perfect but there were these graces the soul growing amongst them.

And we might well ask why it was how it was that this particular church should have such an excellent record in this way that it should so draw forth the apostles praise and thanksgiving because it was thriving so greatly.

Clearly this is one of the reasons because the word of God was having this recourse amongst them and being glorified the apostle says even as it is with you.

their situation was comparatively satisfactory so far this very desirable end had been obtained and so there was this word the gospel that they had received earlier and which was having as such an effect upon them.

This was very plain they had been worshippers of heathen idols and how the apostle could rejoice that that word so came to them that it had that effect that he said that she turned to God from idols to worship the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead even Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come.

[ 11 : 33 ] What a tremendous change had taken place when they received this word and how they did plead to that and that of course is one of the main ways in which we so need to grow.

If there is to be any individual growth or any growth in the church of God it must be through the word of God having recourse amongst them.

The apostle Peter says in that personal way to those to whom he wrote as newborn babes did desire the sincere milk of the word that she may grow thereby.

Clearly if they were so eagerly to hunger and to cry out for the word of life like newborn babes then they would grow by it.

As indeed is of course the case in their natural figure. Also we read in the apostles John's writing concerning those young men to whom he wrote.

[ 12 : 50 ] He says he was writing to them because he is strong and the word of God abideth in you and you have overcome the wicked one.

They were strong they were even able to overcome the wicked one because the word of God was abiding in them not only in their memories in their minds but really having that effect upon their hearts to make them strong.

And so this is a most desirable thing amongst us individually and collectively we so need the word of the Lord to have its free course that nothing should hinder the work of the gospel and the word of the Lord if it really abides in us then it will bring forth that fruit as it has done as we see so plainly in the word.

This was clearly then one of the main reasons why there was such a strong and growing church at Thessalonica and why it was that the word of the Lord which was so strongly held in their hearts sounded out from them into so many other parts.

How different it would appear from the case at Athens. Paul preached there and there were a few that believed but it would seem that the most were left shut up in those heathen ideas and philosophies.

[ 14 : 46 ] Does the word of God abide in you? Does it have free course? It reaches your ears but does it really enter into your heart freely?

Well we may go a little deeper into that and say that the another reason why the church of Thessalonica was growing vigorously was because they were growing up into the Lord himself.

That it was in the written word and the gospel of Christ that they received the person and the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

If we are to grow in spiritual things it must be in that way for there is no other way but by receiving out of the fullness of Jesus Christ that is the great purpose really of having the word abiding in us.

it is that we might know and love and serve the incarnate word who is the great subject and the substance of the whole of the written word.

[ 16 : 13 ] And so it is said concerning the church at Colossae that they were to be concerned in that way that she grow up into him in all things which is the head even Christ.

That they were to grow up into him and they were so to cleave to him in faith and love and so to abide in him as to receive those supplies of his grace and power and wisdom and strength and life that they might grow and grow.

The Savior himself taught his disciples so clearly this vital lesson. He set himself before them as being the true living vine.

He says, I am the vine, ye are the branches. And no branch can grow unless it abides in the vine. Everything depends upon the strength and health of that union where the branch meets the main vine.

And so he says, abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me.

[ 17 : 51 ] But by abiding in him they would grow. They would bring forth more and more fruit. He says, he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.

For without me he can do nothing. Their growth must be as a result of a healthy spiritual living union to the Saviour.

And so Peter again says in his last word, grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Grow up into him in all things. how clearly this church of Thessalonica had really learned that lesson.

They knew that their strength and life were from the Saviour. And thus their faith in him was growing and their love to his people also.

[ 19 : 03 ] What a mercy if it can be said of us, even as it is with you. Does the word of the Lord have free course like this?

That is the second part of the subject, the running of the word of God, this spreading gospel. Now the word free is not really in the original language, which is why it is here in italics.

And the marginal reading says instead of have, may run. Clearly the thought here is, and the figure, that the word of God should run its course.

The apostle, as often, in a more personal way, has this figure of running a race before him. You know in the psalm that we read, there is first the figure of the sun running its race from the one end of the world to the other.

And then there is that beautiful passage concerning the various parts of the revelation of God in his word, that his revelation there is also to run through the world.

[ 20 : 27 ] It is, so to speak, to run its race and to be glorified in the end. Here then it is expressed in such a way that the word of the Lord may run its course.

It should run. If it is not hindered, if the various and many obstacles are removed, so to speak, from its path, then that word will run.

It will make rapid progress. How very desirable this is. The progress of the word of the Lord in the first fifty years or so of the apostles teaching that particular era was most extraordinary.

It was really amazing how that in all those different nations with very poor communications as compared with our own day, how rapidly the word of the Lord ran into these various parts.

And so the apostle desired that this should continue. There were certainly times and places where there was a hindrance to the running of that word.

[ 21 : 57 ] And of course, if it is to run rapidly in a general sense, then it must run as regards the individual believers.

It must have its particular rapid course. Of course, in the running of a race as it is here put before us, there is a particular course laid out.

It is not a haphazard thing at all. There is that which is already determined and purposed. And so it is with regard to the work of the Lord.

The apostle did not expect a universal reception of the word. He did not expect that in every place everyone who heard it would believe, but he did desire that it would run its particular course, that it would, as we read in the first chapter, fulfill, that God would do, through his word, would fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.

But this, through the preaching of the gospel, and through its running in the course that God had appointed to it, might have this effect, that it might bring forth much fruit in the earth.

[ 23 : 37 ] And this was according to the Old Testament promise, as God says, there, my word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

He could not expect it to prosper in any other course, but that which God himself, in his own secret wisdom, has laid down for it.

we may be sure that it will prosper in that way, and that it should run in that course and way that God himself has appointed.

And there should be our constant concern that it may do so. You know how often it may be in a congregation that there are hindrances.

There are those, it may be, who are not prepared to really, really to heed the word. And there are many other distractions that may prevent this happening.

[ 24 : 51 ] We all know as we meet together in this way, how easily we can find that our thoughts wander away in some other course.

we so need, as we hear the precious word of God that he sends, that that should have its free course, that nothing should be permitted to hinder that running of the gospel, running into our hearts, and in our midst.

Well, how much, dear friends, we really need this to be so. Surely there is a sad lack of what is here expressed in our own day.

For one cause or another, often this simply does not happen very much. The word goes forth, but could we really say that it runs?

The word in the psalm says that the word of the Lord, it runneth very swiftly. And there are certainly those times when it does, but how often it seems to be a very slow progress.

[ 26 : 14 ] And we so need the Lord to remove all the obstacles out of the way that that word may truly run. And when it is so, it will be glorified.

This is still probably in connection with the race. At the end of the race, there was a crown of glory presented to the victor.

The races that were often held in those days, there were those crowns made of laurels or something of the kind, which were put upon the heads of those who had succeeded.

When the word of the Lord has free course, then it does, it runs its course, then it, so to speak, receives its crown of glory.

There is that effect of that which is so glorious. in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, as a result of this happening amongst them through the apostles' ministry, he says, ye are our glory and joy.

[ 27 : 35 ] To them, they were the glory of his ministry. They were the crowns, the trophies of grace to him that had been brought in by the preaching of the word of the Lord and when it had run its course.

There are those wonderful evidences of the grace of God. As we read at the end of the first chapter here, the apostles desire that God would do this, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and ye in him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, where that grace is given, where that grace shines, it is for the glory of God. It is like a crown of glory to him.

And this is the great end of the preaching of the word, that God may be glorified in all things. That there may be such a manifestation of his grace, as shall be like a crown of glory at the end of the grace that his word runs.

Again, is this not most desirable? The word of the Lord should be glorified, that it should be crowned with glory, that it should be honored and esteemed, that through the grace that is bestowed upon those that receive it, God himself is to be honored.

[ 29 : 26 ] You see how it must have been so very much in the lives of these Thessalonians, for them to be pagan and sinful and wicked, worshippers of heathen idols, and then in a matter of months, to be so abounding in faith and love and all that was honoring to God, that surely all around them could see what a marvelous change had taken place in their lives by the grace of God.

Surely they were shining examples of what the grace of God can do, and therefore so honoring and glorifying to him.

Now, my dear friends, well might we pray concerning that. Surely there is much here to pray about. The Apostle says, finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have recourse and be glorified, even as it is with you.

the Apostles sought their prayers, and you know that in almost all the epistles that he wrote to the churches, we find expressions of this kind.

There is one in the first epistle, as he asked them there to pray for him. Brethren, pray for us.

[ 31 : 03 ] Now, that church was only really a few months old. When he first wrote, it would sing and hear about a year or two. They were very young believers.

We might have thought, well, they will never be able to pray like the Apostle can pray himself after all of his years of experience and the wisdom and understanding given to him.

But clearly, he prized their prayers. they had that faith which was so necessary to this, and evidently, the Apostle was persuaded that their prayers would have this effect.

As they responded to his exhortation in this way, then there would be this wonderful result of them. he does not attempt to explain what is really beyond explanation exactly, how it would be that their prayers of Thessalonica were going to be such a help to him many, many miles away in Athens or some other place.

that he was persuaded of the fact that this would be the case. We have it again as he prays regarding the Corinthians.

[ 32 : 35 ] He says concerning them, ye also praying, helping together by prayer unto God for us. Ye also helping together by prayer for us.

Their prayers, praying together, was going to help him. He knew that it would do so, and thus he constantly requested the prayers of the believers in the church.

It would be certainly for their benefit, their spiritual profit and further growth for them to pray. And especially that they might pray concerning the ministry of the gospel.

It would be good for them. It would be good for the running of the gospel. And it would be of much help to the apostles in his labor.

And so, in this frequent way, he makes this request. Finally, brethren, pray for us.

[ 33 : 51 ] Now, really, how these things do run together, do flow together. There was this healthy, growing church at Thessalonica.

There was the apostle away in Athens, no doubt facing many difficulties from these unreasonable and wicked men. there was this exaltation and request that they would pray for him, that the word of the Lord should continue to have that free course and be glorified, that it should be a means of bringing more and more honor and praise to the Savior, the gospel of Christ.

Christ, how very precious and powerful that is. Dear friends, how is it as regards ourselves?

is the case here as the apostle decides that it should be so?

Does the word of the Lord have free course amongst us? I'm sure that to some extent that it does, but I'm also sure that there is a great need for it to do so far more.

[ 35 : 22 ] But there are those things, probably there are in all of us, there are those things which do have a restricting effect.

I fear that we do come short of the wonderful high standard reached by this church at Thessalonica with their faith growing exceedingly and their love toward everyone abounding and increasing in that way.

He says in the first chapter, first epistle, but as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves have thought of God to love one another, and indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia, which was a very considerable area.

And he said, but we beseech you that ye do it more and more. What a cross-spring church this was there, Thessalonica, and how we do need, my dear friends, the word of the Lord to run its course and to be glorified amongst us, that it might be glorified in the salvation of precious souls, turning to God, and manifesting the power of his grace in their lives, so that here there is something very plainly to be prayed about.

And indeed, it would seem that there is a very large scope for prayer as regards this. There are many of the ministers of God in the earth in various places now.

[ 37 : 23 ] Since the apostles' days, at least, the extension of the gospel has continued into so many parts of the earth, and in all these different countries, how those who labor in the gospel, and who face often unreasonable and wicked men who have not faith, how much they do need the support of the prayers of the people.

Here, then, we see a praying company, gathered together, not only from Thessalonica, but all the other churches that the apostle wrote to.

They were praying for him. For myself, I do so much appreciate value the prayers that are offered for me.

And I'm quite certain that they are of a tremendous help, that the Lord does answer these prayers. And especially we so need to pray concerning this matter.

It is so much to be desired, that the word of the Lord, which is so graciously given, may have its free course to run, a run in that course freely, that God has appointed for it, and that it may be for his glory and praise.

[ 38 : 50 ] Do you pray about this? Will you continue to pray? Surely there is cause for much prayer as regards this matter. But wherever the word of the Lord goes forth, it may have this free course before it.

It may run its course freely, without all the hindrances that can so easily come up against it. May the Lord help us much to pray concerning this matter.

Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run its course, may have free course and be glorified.

Lord bless his word. Amen. Amen. Hymn 1147, June, Niagara, 877.

Hymn 1147, Hymn 1147, Hymn 1147, The heavens declare thy glory, Lord, in every star thy wisdom shines, but when our eyes behold thy word, we read thy name in fairer lines.

[ 40 : 23 ] The rolling sun, the changing light, and nights and days thy power confess, and the blessed volume thou hast read, reveals thy justice, and thy grace.

Hymn 1147, seven. The heavens declare thy glory, Lord, in every star thy wisdom shines, but when our eyes behold thy blood, we meet thy name thy name is better lives.

The rolling sun, the changing night, and night and days thy God confess, and the blessed volume, all hearts praise, reveals thy justice, and thy grace.

Sun, moon, and stars, come, may thy praise, round the hope of the devil stands, so when thy truth take on his grace, death strength to spread to every land.

Nor shall thy name take last and rest, till through the home thy truth has run, till Christ has o'er the nation's blessed, that see the life fulfill the Son.

[ 42 : 48 ] Great Son of Christ, let arise, bless the Son of world with heavenly light, thy gospel makes that sinful Christ, thy laws are pure, thy just and Christ, viele so canmoreeth, my soul renew, and And make thy world fight thy soul.

O God of all grace and of glory, do help us to pray to thee. We have such a great need to pray, to seek thy favour, to pray that thy word here and in all the earth may run its course and that it may be glorified and that thy name through thy beloved Son may be glorified in our midst and amongst all nations of the earth.

And if there be those things in us, in our ways and words and practices, in our lives, that do hinder the gospel of Christ, O do we beseech thee, take them away, and open our eyes to see where we do fail and err.

May thy precious gospel go forth with mighty power. Remember us now and grant us thy peace and thy blessing.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God the Father, the fellowship and communion of God the Holy Spirit, the divine comforter, be with us all.

[ 45 : 41 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.