**LIVING IN LIGHT OF HIS RETURN**

**2 Thessalonians 3:1-18**

Sunday, December 5, 2021

**WE Slide 1 So good to have some Christmas songs! Hope you’re looking forward to Christmas and our Christmas services!** Be sure to invite your friends and family starting next week. **It’ll be worth their time!**

**Slide 2 Christmas is the beginning of Jesus’ life on earth and His mission to save mankind, but in this series we’ve been looking at what He said about the completion of His mission- how it all ends and how we should live knowing how it will end.** Jesus, God the Son, came to earth as a man, lived a perfect life, died a horrible death on the cross to pay our eternal punishment, rose from the dead to defeat our sin/hell and returned to God’s presence. **Before He left He said He was going to come back, rescue we who have placed our faith in Him and judge those who rejected Him.** The 1st century Christians thought He was coming back in their day and some thought that He had and they somehow missed it. **Paul explained in the 1st letter that Jesus hadn’t come back yet and they were to continue doing what they were commanded to do.** He still hasn’t returned yet so we’ve been looking at these 2 letters and answering the question,“**How should we live in light of His return?/What should we be focusing our lives on while we wait?**”

**IN 2 THESS. 3 Paul is finishing up his 2nd letter with some final instructions.** He doesn’t reference any end time events like he has been doing so let me finish explaining what God says He’s going to do according to the Bible. **Slide 3 We get this information from the book of Revelation.**

1. **Revelation 19-** Tribulation period- 7 years of judgement- comes to an end when Jesus returns to wipe out the anti-Christ and all those who rejected Jesus and pledged their allegiance to the anti-Christ- this is at Jesus’ 2nd coming.
2. **Revelation 20:1-6** **Slide 4** Satan is bound, unable to influence anyone against Jesus, and Jesus sets up His earthly kingdom- 1000-year reign on earth.
3. This fulfills God’s promise to **Abraham**- his descendent would control the land promised to Abraham in Gen. 15.
4. This will also fulfill God’s promise to **King David** that his descendent will reign forever on David’s throne.
5. Those Jews who had placed their faith in Jesus during the Tribulation will experience this fulfillment of prophecy.
6. **Daniel 12:1-2** suggests that the OT followers of God, Abraham, Moses, etc. will rise and live on the earth.
7. **Revelation 20:7-10** **Slide 5** After 1K-years Jesus releases Satan, he’ll deceive many, rebel, earth/heaven destroyed.
8. **Revelation 20:11-15** Those who rejected Christ will stand before the Great White Throne judgment for their sentencing and then they, Satan, the anti-Christ and all who oppose Jesus will be thrown into the lake of fire.
9. **Revelation 21-22** **Slide 6** John describes the new heavens/earth that God will create for we who have trusted Him and received His salvation. A new physical but perfect earth on which we’ll live.

**CONTRARY TO popular belief we won’t be floating on clouds, strumming harps but will be living on a physically perfect new earth without all the pain of sin surrounded by a new universe lit up by God’s presence.** It blows the mind a little as we think about it but we should spend time reminding ourselves that this life is not all there is. **We have an incredible eternity awaiting us who have placed our faith in Christ.**

**As Paul closes out his letter he gives 2 things the Thessalonians were to focus on as they wait for Jesus’ return.** Not surprisingly they are the 2 things Paul has committed his life to and what the Thessalonians have already been doing. **Basically, Paul is telling them what he told them in his 1st letter- EXCEL STILL MORE- keep doing what you’ve been doing. What do you think is the 1st thing they should focus on?** Let’s read vv. 1-5 and find out. **Slide 7-10** If you guess KEEP SHARING the gospel then you’re right!

**GOD**

1. **KEEP SHARING THE GOSPEL, 3:1-5**
2. **Paul/His Team Asked for Prayer As They Traveled and Shared, 3:1-2**
3. They prayed it would spread and be as effective as it was in Thessalonica.
4. Though they were/would continue to be faithful in the face of persecution they would rather not face persecution if possible so they asked for prayer to be rescued from it if possible.

**Paul had experienced God’s faithfulness especially when they were being persecuted so he knew God would be faithful to the Thessalonians if they would KEEP SHARING the gospel. Slide 11**

1. **The Thessalonian Christians Were to Share in Their Area, 3:3**
2. “the Lord is faithful”
3. God is the One who “strengthens” us- sterizo; steroids, to cause to be inwardly firm/committed.
4. God is the One who “protect” us- phulasso; to hold close; God holds us close to Himself. Like a scared child runs to his parents for help/protection, we are protected by God!
5. He will protect us from “the evil one”- could be evil or the one who influences evil- Satan.
6. **LISTEN! Here’s a HUGE POINT to remember-** God NEVER fails, **Slide 12** Philippians 1:6

**Because God doesn’t fail at anything He does, Paul’s confident they’ll continue to be effective. Slide 13**

1. **Paul Is Confident They Will Continue to Be Effective, 3:4-5**
2. They just needed to be committed to doing life the way God said to live it.
3. They needed to let the Lord “direct their hearts into the love of God”- God is the one grows our love for Him and who then gives us the desire to sacrifice for others.
4. They needed to let the Lord “direct their hearts into the steadfastness of Christ”.
5. “steadfastness”- hupomone; capacity to hold up in the face of difficulty, patient determination.
6. The Lord is who give us the patient determination needed to love others/share the gospel.
7. **ANOTHER HUGE POINT “it is the Lord”** who does this which means we need to spend time with Him so He can grow His love and patient determination in us.

**So, if KEEP SHARING THE GOSPEL is the first thing, what do you think is the 2nd thing? That’s right- KEEP SACRIFICING FOR EACH OTHER**.The 2 things we’re all supposed to do until Jesus returns. **But there was a continuing problem in this church that caused SACRIFICING for each other to be difficult**. Look what Paul has to say. **Slide 14-22 What in the world is going on here and how does this relate to “sacrificing” for others?**

1. **KEEP SACRIFICING FOR EACH OTHER, 3:6-13**
2. **The Issue- some Christians weren’t working, expecting the church family to provide for them.**
3. Paul’s not talking about those who are UNABLE to work, but those able/CHOOSING to not work.
4. Christians have a responsibility to care for those in their church who CAN’T work, 1 Timothy 5.
5. 1st century- many needs, most Christians were poor and they were being persecuted.
6. These disobedient Christians, even after Paul told them to get to work, were still not working.
7. They were frustrating the obedient Christians’ attempts to help others.
8. Paul calls them “unruly (v.6), ”undisciplined” (v.11), “busybodies” (v.11), “disobedient” (v.14).
9. “unruly/undisciplined”- ataktos; disorderly, irresponsible; in context- lazy, refused to work
10. “busybodies”- periergazomai; a meddler; interfering by taking up the time, money, energy of those who were willing to work and sacrifice for others.
11. They didn’t “obey”- hupakouo; to follow instructions, they did not follow Paul’s instructions.
12. These lazy Christians were not working and were taking up the obedient Christians’ time, money, and energy expecting them to meet their needs.
13. Obviously this was causing issues/disunity/frustration within the church family.
14. Scripture over/over says that God provides for us when we do what He’s commanded us to do; one big thing ever since creation is that we are to work and work as if He is our boss- He is.
15. We who are capable of working aren’t to put our faith in taxpayer funded government assistance, we are to put our faith in God and how He commands us to live- get a job!

**To solve this ISSUE- an issue that some don’t seem to want to fix- Paul lays out what SACRIFICIAL LOVE should look like in this situation- doing what’s best for others no matter the cost to us.** 1st he says… **Slide 23**

1. **The Solution**
2. Obedient Christians “keep away” from those who choose to not work, 3:6
3. stello; to keep one’s distance; avoid association with
4. **Don’t follow their example but follow Paul/his team’s example**.
5. It’s easy to get lazy when others are doing it and having their needs met.

**To the lazy Christians Paul says… Slide 24**

1. The lazy Christians are to quietly work and eat their own bread, v. 12.
2. “quietly”- hesuchia; without disturbance or fanfare, don’t make a big deal, complain.
3. Lazy people always have an excuse, a reason why they can’t get a job.
4. Paul told them the 1st time he was there, “You don’t work! Then you don’t eat!”.
5. Work is sacred/holy, when we obey and work God promises to provide, **Slide 25** Matthew 6:33

**Disobedient Christians can discourage obedient Christians who feel like they don’t have power to stop them.** Paul encourages the obedient Christians to “not grow weary in doing good”. **Slide 26**

1. Christians are to “not grow weary in doing good”.
2. Good in the sense of taking care of those who need care.
3. Also good in the sense of responding correctly to those who are lazy.
4. Both properly caring for others and correcting those who are not doing thing right can be very tiring, but they were to continue to do both.

**Finally Paul says “If after all this there are still some who choose to not work then don’t associate at all with them anymore.”** This is serious business because it doesn’t just reflect poorly on the church if reflects poorly on Jesus Christ the One Christians say we worship. **If others see Christians being lazy, not working, what do they think of the God they worship? They think that God is not much of a God. Slide 27**

1. Christians are to “not associate” with those who don’t work but are to “admonish” them.
   1. Paul’s talking about those who continue to disobey after his multiple warnings about it.
   2. Do not “associate”- sunanamignumi; to mingle, hang out
   3. “put to shame”- entrepo; literally “to turn in on oneself”, goal was for the believer to look inward, see their sin, and repent of it.
   4. Not as an enemy but “admonish him”- noutheteo; to counsel about avoidance, stopping an improper course, warn, instruct
   5. Loving someone isn’t always fun, easy, and giving a warm, fuzzy, hug. Sometimes doing what’s best for them is gently/firmly telling them the path they’re on is the wrong path.

**Being a Christian is not COMPLEX, it can be difficult, but it’s not COMPLEX.** God wants us to focus on a couple of things as we wait for Jesus to return- SHARING the gospel and SACRIFICING for others. **When we do He promises to strengthen us to do what He’s commanded us to do- we just need to spend time with Him for that to happen.** We’re not going to close with a song this morning just a time of TAKEAWAYS and reflection. **Here are the TAKEAWAYS to reflect on and then commit to. Slide 28**

**YOU TAKEAWAYS**

1. **We Have Our God-given Mission- KEEP SHARING the gospel message.** We have a great opportunity is inviting friends/family to our Christmas series/services. **PRAY AND INVITE.**
2. **KEEP WORKING-** be faithful to live out your God-given responsibilities: family, church, work, serving, sharing.
3. **WORKING?** keep it up, ask God to continue to provide and give you opportunities to sacrifice for others in your church family.
4. **NOT WORK?** Obey God, get a job and allow Him to provide for you rather than look to the gov’t WHICH SEEMS TO BE A REAL PROBLEM FOR SOME and then join us who are obeying God in sacrificing for those who really need it.