

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
2 Thessalonians: Comforting Troubled New Christians With Correct End Times Theology
Part III: Stabilizing New Christians By Describing The Spiritual World War
(2 Thessalonians 3:1-5)

I. Introduction

- A. New Christians are often easy prey for spiritual defeat because they lack the proficiency in using and applying Scripture that is so necessary to overcoming Satan, "the evil one," 1 John 2:14b NIV.
- B. For this reason, new converts need stabilizing direction in the worldwide spiritual war that rages about them, and, in the historical context, Paul briefly provided this in 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 (as follows):

II. Stabilizing New Christians By Describing The Spiritual World War, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5.

- A. Paul wrote here to new believers who faced and saw him face persecution for the faith, Acts 17:1-10.
- B. He had left them due to this persecution, but was relieved to learn later that although he had fled from their area, they had stayed true to faith in Jesus Christ, 1 Thessalonians 3:1-8.
- C. However, in his absence, some of Paul's readers concluded they faced the time of the antichrist, leading to idleness rising from the belief that the end of the world was near, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, 16-17; 3:6-11.
- D. Since evil influences in the spiritual world war that raged around them had fueled all this trouble, Paul clarified the reality of that conflict, supplying stabilizing direction and admonition on it, 2 Thess. 3:1-5:
 - 1. Paul implied that outside the local church, God and Satan were locked in spiritual combat over the souls of lost people, with God seeking to get the saving Gospel of Christ out forcefully to a needy world and Satan trying to obstruct that effort at every available opportunity, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2:
 - a. The Apostle requested prayer for his ministry team that the word of the Gospel would spread speedily ahead in the world and be honored as it had been with his readers, 2 Thess. 3:1 NIV.
 - b. However, as had happened in Thessalonica, Paul noted prayer needed to be made that he and his team might be delivered from "perverse" (*atopon*) and "actively harmful" (*poneron*) men, those who did not believe the Gospel, 2 Thess. 3:2; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 722. They were problematic as they were influenced by Satan, the "evil one" in 2 Thessalonians 3:3 NIV, ESV, for unsaved people belong to Satan's realm (John 8:44), so when they reject the Gospel, Satan can spur them to become harmfully opposed to God's messengers of the Gospel, cf. 2 Timothy 2:24-26.
 - 2. Accordingly, Paul requested that his fellow Thessalonian Christians pray for the rapid spread of the Gospel and for protection for him and his team from actively harmful human foes whom Satan fueled!
 - 3. On the other hand, Paul revealed that in the true local church, which group belonged to the Lord, was a different array of spiritual dynamics, where spiritual progress would actually occur, 2 Thess. 3:3-5:
 - a. Paul wrote God was faithful to establish and guard his readers against "the evil one" (*tou ponarou*), against Satan's effort to stop their discipleship, U. B. S. Greek N. T., 1966, p. 718; 2 Thess. 3:3b.
 - b. Indeed, Paul was confident in the Lord's work in his readers so that they would continue to do what Paul and his team commanded them to do in the Lord, 2 Thess. 3:4. Note how much of a contrast this response Paul expected of his Christian readers from the unsaved who did not believe the Gospel, but who actively sought to harm Paul and his team (2 Thessalonians 3:2)!
 - c. Specifically, Paul was confident God would direct his readers' hearts to the love of God and to the "perseverance" (*hypomonen*) of Christ, to endurance in trials, 2 Thess. 3:5; Ibid., B. K. C., N. T.
 - 4. Accordingly, Paul wrote to assure his readers that since they were in the spiritual sphere of God's Kingdom, discipling progress would occur in them opposite what often occurred in the lost world!
- E. [Note: application of the Parable of the Tares (Matthew 13:24-30) will modify this lesson, for Satan plants unbelievers in organized Christendom to try to disrupt God's discipling in local churches. However, 1 John 2:18-19 reveals many evil lost people cannot tolerate staying around the godly very long, so they leave the local church, and God's discipling progress in the local body continues! (Matt. 13:29-30, 37-40)]

Lesson: Paul stabilized new converts facing persecution by referring to the world war between Satan and God over the souls of men, and he gave directions in handling that war outside the Church by intercessory prayer, and insight that assures of God's sure discipling of those within the true Church.

Application: May we adjust to Paul's insight on this world spiritual war, and inform new converts of it!