



2 Thessalonians

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...and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

2 Thessalonians 3:2

The words here closely reflect those of Romans 15:31 –

“...that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe.”

Paul was constantly hemmed in and persecuted by those who lacked faith. In particular, it was the non-believing Jews. They hounded him, they attacked him, and they did their best to destroy him. This was also true among the Gentiles, but more often than not, their attacks were first spurred on by the unbelieving Jews. The book of Acts carefully details these things, and those in Thessalonica were perfectly aware of this, having seen it in their own city first hand. Acts 17 records this.

His request here, “that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men,” is given to describe the request for prayer of the previous verse. He had made his request, now he gives specific details concerning that request that they can plug into their prayers. The Greek actually has an article in front of “unreasonable.” Thus, he is identifying a specific group of people. It says, “and that we may be delivered from the unreasonable and wicked men.” The word translated as “unreasonable” is rather rare, being used just four times. It is an adjective which signifies “out of place,” and thus “warped.”

There was a specific group of people, warped in their thinking and action, and who were also wicked. Paul desired that prayer be made against them in order to hinder them from effectively stopping the swift and effective transmission of the word of the Lord. To complete his description of them, he says, “for not all have faith.” Again, there is an article in the Greek which is lacking. It says, “the faith.” People may have faith, but are misdirected in their faith. He is unconcerned with their faith, and is targeting his concerns concerning their lack of “the faith” in Christ Jesus. Their lack of this particular faith is what makes them harmful. Not only

do they have faith (in something else), they use the faith they have against “the faith” which Paul proclaims.

Again, it seems certain that those of the Jewish faith are who Paul is referring to. He was one of them and their culture, and he had once worked with all of his might to destroy the faith which is found in Christ. He knew the passion these enemies of the gospel possessed, and he knew that prayer was effective in working against their success.

Life application: Paul asked for prayer. Paul wrote about his prayers. The many examples of prayer that he gives us are intended to show us that prayers are not unnecessary, and that they are effective. It may seem pointless to pray to the God who already knows all things, but it is not. We pray and He hears. A prayer which is not uttered is a prayer which will probably not be acted upon.

But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the evil one.

2 Thessalonians 3:3

Here Paul makes a play upon the words of the previous verse –

“for not all have (the) faith.”

“But the Lord is faithful.”

He is taking the same word, and applying it in two ways. He does this also in Romans 3:3. Here, he is in essence saying, “Not everyone possesses the faith. Despite this, the Lord is faithful.” The implication is that for all who have the faith, He is and always will be faithful. That is then explained in the next words. The Lord, who is faithful, “will establish you.” The word indicates “to firmly plant.” He had just prayed for the Thessalonians in verse 2:17 using this exact same word. Now, having made that prayer, he notes that it will be as he has prayed. This is based upon the faithful nature of God towards those who are in Christ Jesus.

And more than being established, he says that the Lord will also “guard *you* from the evil one.” Some translations simply say “evil.” However, with an article before evil, it should be translated as “the evil,” or “the evil one.” The personification of evil, or the source of evil, meaning the devil, is what is being presented. Again, like the word “faith,” he is using the same word as in the preceding verse, translated there as “wicked,” in order to make a play on the words –

“and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked (evil) men.”

“the Lord will guard *you* from the evil one.”

Note how he had just asked for prayers for himself and those with him in verse 1 & 2, but how in this verse he has spoken only in the second person. He immediately reverted from his needs to a note of comfort for his beloved brethren. The attitude is selfless and “other” directed. He trusts that the prayers of the church will be effective for him and his companions, and so he redirects immediately for their sake.

Life application: It is good to remember, even when we are in times of need, to extend words of comfort and edification to others. If we can trust that those we hope to receive comfort from will have us in prayer, then they are doing what they can for us. With this assurance, we should remember to build them up in their own walk through this world of trial and difficulty.