

## 2Thessalonians 12-10-26a

This is Friday, the 26th of October, 2012. We're in the book of 2 Thessalonians. We resume tonight in chapter 3, verse 3, and we hopefully will move through the next couple of verses.

There's a wonderful statement here about what God does for us that we want to take a close look at. It's very practical, very pertinent, but we'll begin as we always do by taking a moment as we go to the Lord in prayer to focus our attention and to put ourselves in position to receive the grace of God through the truth of his word and the ministry of his spirit. Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful once again to come before your presence and to express to you our thanks and our appreciation for the many ways that you bless us and provide for us and weave us into the fabric of your larger plan and purpose.

We see momentous events throughout the world and certainly in our nation, and we know that our span of time on this earth is brief. You have chosen the place, you have chosen the time, you have chosen the opportunities and the specifics of our personal existence, and we're grateful that we live in this day and this time and have such wonderful opportunities to learn and to grow through the study of your word and with unparalleled and unprecedented access to resources and to things that will help us to understand and be able to make application in a meaningful way. We thank you most of all for the Lord Jesus and for his saving work on our behalf, his continuing sustaining work on our behalf, his presence in our midst, his representation of us with you and before you, and we pray that as we spend this time together in fellowship that each of us will find motivation and encouragement, strength and direction for the days and weeks that lie ahead and that we will be aligned with your plan and your purpose for us as individuals and that we can expand our view and see the larger things that you are accomplishing both now and those things that are being prepared for the days and the ages to come.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will give us insight and understanding so that we can make proper application that the truth we find in this passage will be meaningful to each one of us. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen. Again, in chapter three of 2 Thessalonians, we have Paul sort of beginning the descent.

His flight through the epistle has covered most of its distance and he's basically telling the audience to fasten their seat belts and put their trade tables in the upright lock position because he's coming in for a landing here. And so these are the final thoughts, the final instructions. And we don't know if Paul ever wrote another letter after this to the people at Thessalonica.

This may have been the last communication they ever had from him. So when he says, finally brethren pray for us, it's a meaningful request. We say this to one another, pray for me or I'm praying for you.

There's hardly a week that goes by that I don't have someone specifically ask for prayer or

indicate that they need prayer or give thanks that they were remembered in prayer. And it's a wonderful thing that we can do for one another. He says, pray for us.

And we looked at this last time that the word of the Lord may travel, that it will go forth and go forward and be appreciated just as the people in this town appreciated it when Paul first brought it. That it will meet with a receptive audience, receptive hearts, receptive minds, people who will recognize it for what it is and express faith. This is a legitimate prayer today.

We look around the world, but we also look here at home, what a crying need there is for the word of God to find its way to receptive hearts in our country. Look around at the state of things, at the deterioration of our values, of our heritage. There's a lot of stuff swirling in the national news.

There's a range of things. There's either great apathy because people are self-indulgent and self-centered and they don't really know or care what's going on. They're kind of in a very small orbit with themselves at the center.

But people who do take a care and look beyond often have an agenda. Their big issue is the environment or their big issue is global warming or their big issue is marriage on one side or the other or abortion on one side or the other. And everything gets filtered through that lens.

And so, well, this candidate is good or this development is good, this piece of legislation is good, this policy is good because it does or does not comport with my priority, my big idea. People can do this in all different areas. There are people who get tangled up about fur and whether you're wearing hair that came off of some animal or it could be where did the food come from? How were the animals treated before they arrived on your plate or laid the eggs or whatever it might be? Your clothing, who made the clothing and how hard and difficult were their circumstances? How much were they paid? Am I supporting a sweatshop? What sort of politics is played by the company that I patronized and gave some money to? Am I going to not watch this movie or buy this video or watch this channel or whatever because I'm tacitly supporting somebody who their management, there's people who boycotted Chick-fil-A because they didn't like their management.

There's people that boycott Disney or boycott Sears or boycott Walmart, boycott Target, boycott Penny's because they find out that they've got this or that corporate policy. Well, this is the world in which we live, right? It's all around us. And we have to make decisions about this.

To what extent do we see these things reflecting our commission, our calling, our purpose defined by the Lord himself that says that we are to shine like lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. By the way, before you get too depressed about how dismal and crooked and perverse the generation is, notice that Jesus said that back in his day, every generation is made up of human beings and we're all made out of the same miry clay. All of us.

The human heart is not any more or less wicked in this day and age than it ever was. Societies can reflect certain values for a time, but you can't impose those values on a subsequent generation. If those people come up and reject the values, you can't put them on the books as laws and expect them to sort of sink in by osmosis.

So as we look around, we look at what Paul says. You think about Thessalonica. Think of Thessalonica as Plano, Texas.

It's a town full of people and they've got their controversies. They've got their ups and downs. They're good people and bad people.

They've got people that are throwing rocks at other people for various reasons. Some people don't like it because here comes a bunch of people from another country and they build a mosque in the neighborhood. Well, we don't want a mosque in our neighborhood.

This is Texas for crying out loud. What are we doing with mosques? But then you could have somebody else that lives in a willow bend or somewhere and they say, we don't want a church in here. This is the affluent part of town.

We don't want people thinking we're a bunch of Bible belt buckled, shining hicks and boot scuffing Protestant evangelicals. This is low rent to have a church here in the middle of our... People are always going to fight about something. Here's the thing.

When Paul says, finally, brethren, he does not turn to the politics of the day. Keep in mind, it was very similar in Thessalonica in Paul's day. Same sorts of give and take, same mix of people just trying to work and support their families and be conservative and learn about the Lord Jesus and growing grace and knowledge of the Savior, not trying to take over the town, not trying to change the laws, not trying to do anything, but just live their lives and love the Lord Jesus and one another.

That's all they want to do. But the hostility incited in their neighbors by the principalities and the powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age. And don't kid yourself.

When you hear this bitter, vicious, supercilious, sneering, hatefulness, this is a cooperation of two sources. This is the fallen human heart happily conspiring with the forces that run this world. They are in league and it is amplified and it is exponentially greater because the fallenness of the human heart is bad enough.

But it partners, it brokers, it enters into and is energized by forces beyond itself. And it's one of the reasons that people get sort of a heady feeling about this because they have, in fact, tapped into something beyond themselves and it's a rush. It is a sense of empowerment and entitlement that partakes of something and they don't really know what it is.

We know what it is. And this is why it is attractive. When the scripture says, men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

They are tapping into larger things unknowingly. But this is why it seems so powerful and so dark and in some ways so scary because it is, it goes beyond the people. It goes beyond the talking heads.

Hear me now. This is what was going on in Thessalonica. This is what has gone on in every generation.

What we are seeing, what we're experiencing is not new. It is as old as the first lie. It is as old as the conversation that the serpent had with Eve in the garden.

Hath God not said, you may eat of every tree? Well, we're not supposed to eat of this one. Oh, that's not right. He's keeping you down.

He's holding you back. He's trying to take away your contraceptives. He's trying to limit your government check.

He's trying to put away your old people. He's, you know, this, they used to call it the man, you know, back in the late 60s and early 70s. Well, it's the man, you know, the man is keeping us down.

The administration of colleges is holding you back and keeping you down. The government is the boogeyman. Well, this boogeyman argument goes all the way back.

The very first argument ever made to human beings was the boogeyman argument. And anytime you hear the man argument, he's keeping you down. He's holding you back.

Consider the source. That's the trademark. That's the stamp.

You can't get away from it. It is the satanic argument from the beginning. Why should we have to submit to you? You're holding us down.

You're holding us back. It's the satanic argument. God knows if you eat this, you'll be out from under.

You'll be as good as he is. You'll be as smart as he is. You'll know what he knows.

God doesn't want equality. You know, it's the class warfare argument. It all goes back to the garden.

So don't kid yourself. Identify the source. Well, this was happening at Thessalonica.

Now here's what's interesting to me. In the midst of this, and you just want to, you want to push

back. You want to counter.

You want to do something. How can we push back this evil? Here's what Paul said to people who were in this very same situation. What does he say? He says, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will move out.

That it will travel, that it will go, and that it will be appreciated. What is the power capable of counteracting? Satanic argument. What did Jesus say? It's not bread.

It's the word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Paul says, look, I know what you're facing. We've just spent a chapter talking about the lawless one and the power of lawlessness that is already at work, the spirit of it, these lies and these false rumors, people pretending like they're speaking for us.

He said, look, pray that the word will go forth. And we pray today. You don't have to pray for a candidate or a party or a platform or a particular piece of legislation or for the outcome of any given contest.

Pray that the word of God will get out and get appreciated. That pastors who are faithful in studying teaching will be unhindered, that that message will be clear and that hungry hearts will hear it and respond to it. Government, especially in this country, is a creation of the people and a reflection of the people.

And when we've got bad government and bad laws and corruption, you know why that is? Because it reflects what our population has become. The solution is not to try to fix the effect. The solution is to change the hearts that are causing it, hearts that are tolerating it, hearts that are being deceived into believing in it.

How do you cut through the deceit? It isn't by, you know, God bless all the guys that are doing AM talk radio and that, but that's not how you cut through the deceit. Because you're preaching to the choir. You think any of the people that are being deceived are listening to Rush and Glenn and all the rest of these guys, Hannity and all these? No, people who are deceived won't spend two minutes listening to that unless they're mining it for quotes that they can turn around and use against them.

This word is what cuts through the deceit. This is what clarifies. This is what opens blind eyes.

This is what enables the deaf to hear and the heart to receive truth. This word. So when you pray for the country, oh, God bless the USA, you know, Lee Greenwood can sing that thing forever.

That's not going to bless the USA. You know what will bless our country? The word going forth and it being appreciated, God being glorified in it and through it. Good, sound, biblical, expository preaching and teaching that can change hearts and minds.

It's a supernatural weapon against a supernatural foe. That's why Paul says, pray that the word of the Lord will run and be glorified just as it was with you. Look at you.

Look how strong you are in the face of all of this opposition. Look at the scales that have fallen from your eyes and you see what's going on. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.

Isn't this our prayer for the country? We could be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. Absolutely. Both in government and in the population, people pushing for the disintegration of our values and our ethics and our morals.

For not all have faith. And you say, well, not all have. Some have faith and some don't.

Pray that we may be delivered from unreasonable wicked men for not all have faith. This isn't the gift of faith. This isn't Calvinistic, predetermined faith.

Paul is leading into something. And to understand this statement, we've got to go into the next verse. Not all have faith, but the Lord is faithful.

If you're waiting for a huge revival and you hear this from time to time, people say, what we need is revival. Let's win the world of Christ by the year 2000. You remember that? You're old enough to remember.

Oh, there was a big push in the late 80s and all through the 90s. We're going to win the world by the year 2000. 2000 languages, 2000 countries, 2000 something or others by the year 2000.

They had maps, they had charts, they had efforts, they had fundraising, they had people going hither and yon. Well, there's no real discernible difference between the 1990s and the 2000s in terms of the proliferation of evil, the progress of darkness. Nobody went out and brought in the millennial kingdom.

Pray that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men at every level for not all have faith. In other words, when the word goes forth, there are some that are just going to reject it. They are going to turn it down.

Romans 1, they will suppress the truth and unrighteousness. God will be turning them over to all kinds of discipline. So don't pin your hopes even as you pray for the word to go forth, even as you pray that it will be received, even as you pray that we are delivered from unreasonable evil men.

Don't pin your hopes on that. Pray for that. Push for that.

But our hope does not rest on how well received the word is, because not all men are going to have faith. They're just not going to receive it in faith. Where do you find the answer? The Lord is faithful.

The Lord is faithful. We push for these things. We hope for these things.

But the future, the fate of our nation, the fate of our family, the fate of our personal life is in God's hands. And thank the Lord He is faithful. He is faithful, full of faith.

What He says, He does. He never goes back on His word. He never fails to fulfill His promises.

He never suffers the righteous to be moved, never lets our seed go, you know, begging bread. The Lord is faithful. Who will establish you and guard you from the evil one? And last week we left off saying, what does it mean that He will establish you? Is this like establishing a business or establishing a building? But established is not really the best translation for this word.

This word literally means support. It talks about something that is fixed in place. And it's very interesting to trace its history of use in the Greek language and all that, but we don't have time for that.

But this is sterezo. And it means to make something fast, to lash it down, to secure it in place so that it doesn't move around. You've got a boat, you're sailing, the wind comes up and the boat starts heeling over.

If you've got a bunch of deck chairs and stuff, many, many people have lost all kinds of stuff when they were caught by a sudden gust. They were out there sailing in a real calm breeze, have got all their canvas up. All of a sudden, a little, they're not watching the surface of the water, which will tell you that one of these is coming.

But all of a sudden, lays over, there goes your jewelry, there goes your food, there goes your tables and chairs, there goes people, dogs, all kinds of stuff over the side because you weren't watching and it wasn't tied down, it wasn't made fast. Sterezo. This is one meaning, you lash something and make it fast so that you don't lose it.

But it also means if you've got a young tree that you don't want to bend and snap, you put stakes out and you lash it for what? Support. You're putting in new fence posts and you pour the concrete around the base, what do you do? You get some two by fours, two or three of them, and nail them on there and make sort of a tripod deal and get the thing leveled and it's support until the concrete sets and it holds it in place, holds it in the position it's supposed to be in just like it should be, these extra supports. That's exactly what sterezo means.

It's exactly what it means. And that's the word that is used here. But the Lord is faithful who will support you, who will hold you in place when there are forces trying to dislodge you or overturn you or upset you or sink you, blow you away.

It's a big storm heading for the eastern seaboard there, Virginia area, and everybody's battering down and so on. Well, what are they doing? Sterezo. So that things will still be there after the

storm passes in their original location.

The Lord is faithful and what you want by way of a support is something that's reliable. You don't want a support that's going to break. So you make sure your support is faithful, that it's reliable, that it is not going to give way when you need it.

That's what God is. Now, what's the practical application of this? We all are taxed. We all have storm winds that blow.

We have challenges. We get down, we get discouraged. There are things that face us and we don't have an answer.

We look to heaven, we say, Lord, I sure hope you're up there paying attention. And then we feel bad because that's blasphemy. Of course, he's up there paying attention and then we just feel worse and we just kind of spiral around.

And listen, when Paul is talking to these people, they're just like us, their circumstances and situation, 2000 years removed, not that different. The same kind of pressure on the human soul. Paul doesn't tell them to go out and join their local political action group.

He doesn't tell them to go picket. He doesn't tell them to go join a self-help group or get online and blog with somebody or all of the things that the world typically turns to. What does he say? He says, the Lord is faithful.

He is your support. He will support you. People always fail.

We're all made out of the same gooey, unreliable stuff. We fail. We were insensitive.

We're not there. We're unavailable. We got problems of our own.

We're just stupid. There's all kinds of reasons why we let each other down. We're just, we're all fallen.

We're all messed up. And ideally, we're sensitive to the prompting and the bleeding and the ministry of God's Holy Spirit as He activates the Word of God in our souls. And we've got a spiritual gift and we're looking out for one another.

We're trying to follow this one another commands. Inevitably, however, somebody will let you down. I will let you down.

You will let me down. We all sooner or later let each other down because we're just stupid and fallen and corrupt and we're not ultimately glorified yet. When that happens, and sometimes because it happens, it is a reminder to us that there is one who never fails, who's never not there, who is never unfaithful, who never fails.

And that's the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Lord here is the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul, in every case I can think of, when he says the Lord, he's talking about the Lord Jesus Christ.

You look at the previous context here, God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. He doesn't say Jesus Christ and the Lord, our Father. You know, just don't see that phraseology.

Lord means Lord Jesus. Now think about that. We tend to think, well, God, the Father is orchestrating everything and Jesus is kind of sitting his right hand interceding and he did the cross thing and he's kind of inactive.

That's not what it says. The Lord Jesus Christ is faithful. He is looking out for us.

He will support us. Now, I think this goes beyond intercession. You know, the Lord Jesus is a lot more active than we sometimes think.

Remember Revelation 3.20? It doesn't say, Jesus, behold, I sit at the right hand of the Father and remind him to send an angel to look out for you. What does it say? Behold, I myself stand at the door and knock. And if any man will hear my voice, my voice and open the door, I will come in to him.

John 14 and 15 and 16, that wonderful upper room discourse. Jesus says, the one who has my words and keeps them, my words, my voice, he it is that loves me, I and my Father will come to him. Don't let that static representation of God on his throne and Jesus at his right hand fool you.

That's one aspect of truth, but it by no means fully describes all of the activity, all of the active support that the Lord Jesus Christ himself has promised you and me. The Lord himself is faithful. The Lord himself will support you, be there for you, hold you up and guard you from what? From everything we've been talking about.

What's behind all of this nonsense in the political realm and in the economic realm and in the social realm? What's behind all of this? It's the evil one. He's orchestrated. He's the God of this world.

That's not an idle appellation. That's not a superfluous title. He is the God of this world.

He's running things. He's got hierarchies. He's got shadow governmental influences all over the place.

High, low, big, small. He's pushing the agenda of darkness. He is pushing the anti-God, anti-Christ, lawless agenda.

Spirit of lawlessness has been at work and is still at work and will be at work. And it's gonna really go nuts when we leave. So final thing before we take our break, notice in verse three, he will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

Do you see the directionality here? What direction is support? That's toward us personally, isn't it? The Lord Jesus is looking at us first. We get first billing. He supports us and makes sure we don't fall over.

Then what does he do? He turns around and guards us from the evil one. Holds us up, establishes us, puts our feet on the rock, then turns around and when the attack is coming, he guards us. He provides the buffer.

He is the defense. Nothing's gonna get through the Lord Jesus. There's no demon.

You look at how much power the demons have against the Lord Jesus. Look at how much power Satan himself had against the Lord Jesus. He guards us.

He sustains us. And you know what's great about it being the Lord Jesus here? Do you think he doesn't know what it's like to be in flesh, in this world, facing forces of darkness, being a light shining in a dark place? Do you think he doesn't know what that's like? Of course he does. He knows exactly firsthand what it's like.

That's why he is the member of the Trinity. Of course, inextricably linked with the Father and the Holy Spirit. But it is Jesus who holds us up, holds us steady and actively guards us from the evil one.

He does it. So, sometimes he works through our fellow believers. And when we're doing what we should do, we can be a great blessing and a great comfort and encouragement to one another.

And where two or three are gathered, there is Jesus in the midst. And we can be a blessing and he can work in and through us. But when people fail, as we inevitably will, and as we inevitably do, don't sell short the Lord Jesus.

He is the primary support. He is the primary defense. And this is his promise.

And this is what Paul gives the Thessalonian believers. He says, look, I know the chips are down. I know it's tough.

I know it seems like the whole community is against you. But look at who is for you. Look at who is on your side, at your side, holding you up and protecting you.

We just have to remember. We just have to avail ourselves. Look at how he does it.

The word goes forth. The word is appreciated. This is a part of that word.

And when we hear this and appreciate it, take it to heart, place our faith in it, pray over it, meditate on it. We are strong and we stand because the Lord Jesus himself is holding us up and guarding us. Let's pause here and take our break.

We'll come back and begin at verse four.