

LSB 2 Thessalonians 3:1 - 5

1 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; 2 and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men, for not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, who will strengthen and guard you from the evil one. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. 5 And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ. .

This is a God thing that we happened to land in these verses at this moment. Providentially scheduled entirely by God. To the day, to the hour, to the moment of His design, and for His pleasure, to accomplish His purposes.

Put another way, it is no accident, at all, that we have landed in this particular passage of scripture this morning. God scheduled these words for this time, in eternity past, before we ever were. Such is providence by powers and intelligence so far beyond ours that we can scarcely begin to comprehend how little we can actually comprehend.

For God to be so powerful that every event of every nano-second of every free will decision by every creature from the beginning of time to the end, including all the evil that Satan has caused, all lives within the control of a Sovereign God who controls everything, past, present and future in His own providence, for His own glory and pleasure, is so mind boggling that we can only stumble around trying to begin to understand just a little.

R. C. Sproul who was so very much more eloquent than I could ever hope to be said; *There is not one piece of cosmic dust that is outside the scope of God's sovereign providence.*

He said; *“If there is one single molecule in this universe running around loose, totally free of God’s sovereignty, then we have no guarantee that a single promise of God will ever be fulfilled.” “If there is one maverick*

molecule in all the universe, then God is not sovereign. And if God is not sovereign, He is not God.”

Such is the providence and control of a Sovereign God over all things for His glory, and **for our good, if** we are His possession, under His love and care, and not His enemies who war against His Sovereign ownership.

We're off to a good start because that little lesson beyond any of our capacities was just a value added free door prize for everyone. No extra charge for that. My point being that we landed at these revealed words in scripture this morning on schedule with perfect timing.

There has been talk, it's no secret, that different christians around town have said, perhaps this is the time for all the true believers in Tonopah to gather together under a common roof.

Lots of positives. Lots of negatives. Lots of possibilities. Lots of natural conflicts and problems. Some new greater securities. Some frightening insecurities. Some people are excited by the possibility, and others are clearly full of dread and foreboding.

What do I think? This little passage in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 is the clear answer. I don't have a horse in this race. We'll see that as we work our way through these verses together this morning.

Paul's prayer is my prayer and should be your prayer. In this matter, and in every other succeeding matter from now until Jesus gathers us to Himself.

What did Paul pray for??? Put your thinking caps on and keep up. (With Paul, not me . . . lol)

I Finally, brothers, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified,

Finally. Finally brethren. Fellow christians of all ages and genders in

every possible role but common to all, in Christ. All regenerated born again christians. The brethren are the called out ones. Elect, chosen by God, separated from Satan's authority to reign, Satan's kingdom, and transferred by a purchase of blood, into God's authority to reign. The kingdom of God. If you are ***born again*** into that group, you were then and are now, brethren. Brothers. Sisters. Fathers. Mothers. Of each other.

The word ***finally***, indicates the previous discussion has been finalized and we're moving on to something different. Something new. So Paul makes a paragraph break.

Paul always follows a pattern in His letters. Doctrine ~ Duty. This is who you are. Therefore, this is how you live. He doesn't ask for a response without a basis. This is who you are, therefore, gird up your loins and act like who you actually are.

In the letter to the Ephesians, some argue, the whole book is a single sentence until you get to Chapter 6 verse 10 at the final words. He says, finally, put on your armor and go to war. We'll talk about that war a little bit, because it's always there, always in the background, always the driving purpose for the brethren.

I Finally, brothers, pray for us . . .

Pray for us. Paul has constantly prayed for them. Finally he asks something of his brethren, his spiritual children. They are who they are because he came to town. Their lives are changed because of Paul.

He is their shepherd, their father in the faith, their care giver, their security as far as truth. He has brought them the truth. They were lost but because Paul showed up, they have been forgiven, adopted into God's family, removed out of this perishing world, recipients of life. Eternal life.

Paul says; my turn. Could you do something for me? Pray for me. Pray on my behalf. Actually pray for us plural. Paul was never alone if he could

help it. He was the main guy, but he had some fellow travelers. Fellow workers.

And then typical of Paul, he doesn't ask for anything for him. He says pray for me, and then he doesn't ask for anything he can spend on himself. He is completely selfless. Pray that I have enough to eat. Nope. Pray that I maybe get some comfort and rest. A pastor's retreat at some fishing lodge where people make a big deal about serving me. Oh heavens no.

Pray for my bank account because I'd like to retire some day and be comfortable and secure. Laughable NO. Pray for my stature. Pray that I'll be the single most wanted preacher at the conferences, the most famous, most important christian alive. Nope. Pope? Nope.

Finally, Paul gets around to asking for something, and he doesn't ask for anything for him! No healing. No comfort. No wellness. Not even any personal blessing. No travel mercies. Nothing. Well, what does he ask for then.

I Finally, brothers, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified,

This is abstract. Pray for the logos tou Kyriou. The word of God.

Paul prays for the words, the revealed word of God, the word of the Lord to do something. Pray that the Logos will run rapidly.

Did you know that the logos, the word of God has a life of it's own. Look with me to Isaiah 55. And as I read these words, this logos, bear in mind that my entire ministry is based in these few verses. So much so, that I wouldn't bother, if it wasn't for what God says through Isaiah in these 4 verses, these 13 lines of text from Yahweh's mouth. If not for these 13 lines of words I would refuse to enter this pulpit. It's that important; Isaiah

55:8 - 11

8 *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," declares Yahweh.*
9 *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts than your thoughts.*
10 *For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth
And making it bear and sprout,
And giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,*
11 *So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what pleases Me,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.*

Did you hear and understand what those magnificent words are saying?

God's revealed words, all the words of this book, and no other, I might add, have a life of their own. They have a power to accomplish God's purposes, independent of the speaker. X2

Paul believed that. He said; *16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* Ro. 1:16

The power to accomplish God's will and purposes are independent of the person delivering them. The gospel, the logos, is the power of God to cause salvation. And the logos does not stop at salvation, it is the power to do everything else God wills it to do, including creating the worlds we inhabit. The power for every purpose of God.

I'm going to get very personal for a moment or two. Something I am loathe to do, and these verses explain the reason.

I have struggled with a rather severe inferiority complex for most of my life. The kids in junior high made sure I understood that I was somehow

inferior. I was a late starter so I was smaller than some. But mostly, I was beset with a vision condition. Almost 20-20 in my right eye, and so near sighted in my left eye, almost blind. Things begin to blur at just 6 inches away from my left eye.

So besides my other limitations, not quite as big, perhaps not as pretty, the vision thing kind of spoiled my depth perception. I couldn't hit the ball. Couldn't catch the ball. Was rather practically, afraid of the ball. Well in America, that's a devastation to a junior high kid. You're basically worthless. Kids would actually fight over which team was forced to take you. It marked me pretty much for life.

I found out much later, I'm actually pretty athletic, very athletic in sports that don't require hitting and catching balls. Too bad I wasn't British. I could do quite well at soccer. Physically I'm blessed to be able to keep up with almost anyone and sometimes even surpass others, but the damage was done. So I am shy and reserved. Never popular. Never the good old boy. Don't care to watch sports. They bore me. They damaged me.

All of that said, only to say, I'm the last guy who would step up in a leadership position and volunteer to lead men. Im broken. People just naturally don't like me. It's OK.

But then God comes along and says, it's not about you, mister. It's about my Words. The power isn't you. The talent isn't you. All I really need is a mouth and a voice to articulate my Words. After that, it's really not up to you, it's up to ME to take my word and accomplish my good pleasure.

It turns out, God reserved some gifts I would have liked to have had, but He has graciously given me other ones. I have a fine mind to understand His book. And oddly enough, I can get up here and actually teach. That's a gift. No one's more surprised than me.

But in my lack of self confidence and timidity the last place I would ever want to be is in a pulpit in front of people, speaking. Good thing there's

only 15 of you. 40 might undo me.

Because of Isaiah 55, I was cautiously teaching an evening Bible study here when Dennis Barr left to retire. And you folks graciously said, can you just do in the pulpit on Sunday mornings what you've been doing on Sunday nights. I had already told God, if the door opened, I would obediently go through.

I have zero confidence in what I have to offer. Beat into me by 13 year olds. But God has taught me, it's not about you or anything you can bring, He just needs a voice to make the sound waves to launch His words into the stratosphere.

After that, whatever happens with it, that's His purpose, not mine. So here I am. And that's the most I ever expect to say about myself, and my purpose is to explain; God's words have power independent of the vehicle that delivers them. X2

And it turns out, I'm in pretty good company. That's exactly where Paul was at and exactly what he asked the Thessalonians to pray for.

I Finally, brothers, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified,

Did you catch that. Paul asks for prayer for the Word of God to have a life of it's own. He wants God's word to catch like a fire and spread everywhere. Independent of him. In fact he'd probably like to stand on a hill somewhere and just watch the fire spread as far as his eyes can see.

The greek word translated in the LSB as *spread rapidly* is actually the word to run. To travel with speed.

Did you catch that? At the risk of sounding like a broken record saying the same thing; Paul doesn't say pray for me to have the stamina to keep on going because this whole deal will collapse in on itself if anything happens

to me. Actually quite the opposite. Pray that the word will catch fire and spread self sustainingly.

Paul understood, he's just a piece of kindling wood in this fire. He's just the match that starts the first tree at the edge of the forest. Burn baby, burn. Here I am 20 centuries later throwing whatever fuel I can muster up onto the blaze! We still want the same result. A worldwide forest fire of the Word of God.

Jesus used a different metaphor to teach the same idea. Mt. 13;
33 He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three sata of flour until it was all leavened."

Yeast. Like a forest fire. It self sustainingly keeps transferring and growing. It reproduces itself. Over and over until something tiny becomes something huge. Both metaphor's are useful.

A single spark can cause a forest fire that can be seen by satellites in outer space. But eventually a fire dies when there's no more fuel. Yeast on the other hand can live forever. We buy bread from Salt Lake City, Stone ground bakery, and they tell us, the starter for the sour dough has been in continuous use for 40 years.

The Word of God shares both principals of those two metaphors. It starts small and grows to enormous proportions, and it can self sustain, literally, forever. The Word has a life outside of me. All I have to do is let the lion out of the cage.

Just what you wanted, a 3rd metaphor. The word of God is like a lion and when I speak or teach God's words, I'll let the lion out and he'll eat whoever he wants.

Full disclosure. It's kind of the only thing I'm sort of good at. Not much good at all the other stuff you want a pastor to do. If you were the folks in

the wreck last week, I'm not the guy who wants to visit and comfort you in your distress. Kirk would have to call me and make me go with him. Probably not gonna go on my own. I'd rather be by myself cutting firewood. Chopping firewood.

Not much good at counseling. Ask the apricot and peach trees in my back yard. I pruned them almost to death. The peach tree is trying to hang on and the apricot tree has like 2 branches that are still trying. I counsel like I prune trees apparently. Obviously not my gift.

I can be pretty fierce if I think someone is a threat to the sheep. That might be a plus. It's this word-of-God-thing-that-has-a-life-of-it's-own that keeps me in the game though. That's my single interest. Get it delivered. My job is over then. The Word will accomplish every good thing God wants it to. Independent of me or my talents or lack thereof.

It's funny, as we grow older and crotchier, crankier, I've discovered just in the last couple of years that I get annoyed by preachers who are clever. God doesn't need your cleverness. Teach the word. In season and out of season. Period. Don't help the word with your cleverness. OK, rant out:

The word of God has a life of it's own apart from the one who delivers it. My job, as I see it, is simply to unlock the door and let the lion out.

Again, why? Why was Paul motivated to do that and why am I motivated to do that 1960 years later?

*I Finally, brothers, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly **and be glorified, just as it did also with you;***

The purpose above and beyond all other purposes that we might do anything is stated clearly in this verse. The GLORY of God underlies all that we think and do. The end of all things, all created things, is to glorify their Creator.

31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Cor. 10:31

That seems pretty clear. Any interpretive problems here? None. Whatever activity you are engaged in, ask yourself a question. If Jesus showed up this instance to gather His beloved saints together to Him in the sky, is what I'm doing at that moment, every moment, glorifying God?

Paul was engaged in traveling around all over creation wherever his feet could take him and letting the lion of the Word of God out of it's cage. And Paul's stated reason;

*I Finally, brothers, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, **just as it did also with you;***

God's word, delivered by Paul, was turning the world upside down. Paul was this little magneto sparking all over western Asia and what would become eastern Europe delivering a message that was both powerful and self reproducing that was calling a people out of Satan's kingdom and into God's.

The word of God was spreading like a forest fire, all over the known world. God was gaining territory for His glory, and Satan was losing territory.

That's really the bottom line folks. We are an army, equipped with the Word of God, which is it's own dynamite, and our purpose during our stay here on earth is to unleash the dynamite, and gain ground for God's glory, taking spoils from Satan's kingdom and adding those spoils to God's kingdom for His glory.

Paul says; *just as it did also with you;* Paul says pray that what happened in Thessalonica, through the dynamite explosive power of the Word of the Lord, will happen . . . everywhere. For the glory of God.

Unleash the Word of God and let the dynamite do it's job in Satan's

territory. Right under Satan's nose. God will call people out of slavery and misery, out from under Satan's rule, into forgiveness and new life and joy and peace that glorifies the Creator.

ZuZu Bailey's famous quote from "It's A Wonderful Life." *"Look daddy, teacher says, every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings,"*

That's utter baseless nonsense. But according to Paul we actually can state, every time the Word of God goes forth and creates a new life in Christ, or accomplishes some other purpose according to God's kind intention of His will, something eternal is accomplished, and God is glorified.

Paul isn't finished with his request with just what he asked for in vs. 1
1 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you;

I have a final metaphor. The Word of God stirs up a hornets nest. As we speak, in this moment in time, Satan is the king of this world. He usurped that authority by sin spreading like a virus to every single person born of Adam. All sin. All are born IN sin. Evil pervades. Satan rules.

And when someone like Paul, or perhaps you, or me, actually unleashes the Word of the Lord, and people respond and are transferred out of Satan's ownership and into God's ownership, do you think maybe that might displease the old serpent? Oh, trust me, it does.

If what happened at Thessalonica was also unleashed in Tonopah Nevada, I can guarantee you, a virtual hornets nest would be stirred up, and the devil would do his best to sting us to death.

And that's why Paul includes the second part of his request; Pray that God will be glorified by the unleashed power of His Word to reclaim sinners, but also pray;

Vs. 2 and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men, for not all have faith.

Thessalonica was such a hornets nest that the brothers had to hustle Paul out of town in the dead of night to prevent his murder. It was HOT. Read about it in Acts 17. The persecution of the new christians was like a swarm of angry hornets. The serpent fights back!

5 But the Jews, becoming jealous, taking along some wicked men from the marketplace, and forming a mob, set the city in an uproar. And attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the assembly. 6 And when they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also; 7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." 8 And they disturbed the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things.

This prayer Paul requests is a double edged sword. Pray that the Word of God will turn the world upside down. And then when it does and Satan is mad as a hornet, pray for our wellbeing because we already know what's going to happen when we turn the Word loose and Satan loses territory.

He'll be furious and he'll try to get people to kill us. *2 and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men, for not all have faith.*
We'll need to be rescued. Again. Happens every time.

Here's Paul's resume; *23b in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, in beatings without number, in frequent danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked—a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the desolate places, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brothers. 27 I have been in labor and hardship, in many sleepless nights, in starvation and thirst, often hungry, in cold and without enough clothing.* 2 Corinthians 11:23-27

Is that what we signed up for? It was interesting to me during the Covid shut down, in Canada where some pastors refused to obey the state's orders and went to prison and in California where my pastor refused to close down and was threatened weekly with jail time and massive fines that the blowback wasn't from the world, it was from so-called christians.

The "*christians*" [in scare quotes] were all pointing their fingers at the folks who were in trouble with the state and saying you're not being persecuted. You brought this on yourself. You could have gone along to get along like the rest of so called christendom. You brought this on yourselves.

The state, the governments everywhere, whether they were unknowingly duped by Satan or not, were using a new found power to shut down the Word of God. In the name of a so-called pandemic that wasn't a pandemic, they used their power to quench the Word of God, stifle the Word of God, silence the Word of God, and order christians to cease and desist obeying the word of God. And big Eva got on board with the world.

Jesus had something to say about such things.

11 *"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

That's all well and good, but it's what He says next that is most troubling for our current brand of go-along-with-the-world *evangelicalism* slash christendom;

13 *"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out to be trampled under foot by men.*

If Satan isn't getting angry and fighting back like mad hornets it might be

because we are so unsalty as to have become no threat to him at all.

If we're doing this right, God's word is causing new life and real losses to Satan's holdings. And when that is true, Satan fights back. At least he used to. And still does in a few little spot fires here and there.

My prayer is that we would corporately and individually be enough of a threat that we would need to be like Paul, looking over our shoulder at what's coming next, and praying for deliverance from harm brought by evil men.

The book you hold in your hands has the explosive power of dynamite, the terror of a hungry lion, the devastation of a forest fire, and the permeating power to spread as yeast in dough. It is the sword of the Spirit, the offensive weapon against Satan and his kingdom in this world.

It's our job to unleash it.