

# Portrait of Humility

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5  
**Preached on:** Sunday, July 24, 2016

I'm always captivated by the reality of seeing new vistas when you move around in the Rocky Mountains. I don't know if you've been there or not. I spent many many months there. Every time you come around a path, all of a sudden you see something new and glorious. Such is the journey in the word of God. We come to a new vista where we see a portrait of humility in the Apostle Paul and this is found in 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5. If you've not been with us, we have been going through as we always do, various passages or various epistles verse by verse and we now come to this section of Scripture that I will read in a moment, and it's fascinating as we look around the world in which we live, we see many different contrasts. We see the contrast of fire versus water. We see the contrast of light versus darkness. We see the contrast of cold versus heat. And we see the contrast of pride versus humility. Perhaps I can establish this contrast for you. First of all, we must understand that by nature all men are sinners therefore sin is ubiquitous in the world in which we live. It is all around us. It is the most dominating and devastating reality of our existence. We see it in our own lives, we see it in our world that is absolutely drowning in it.

By definition, sin is called lawlessness in the word of God. Any violation of God's perfect and holy law therefore fits into that category. God's law reflects all that is righteous. It reflects his character but man is by nature unrighteous. He rebels against God's law and he is ungrateful to God for all that he does, all that he is, and because man's fallen mind is utterly dominated by sin, he will seek every opportunity to dethrone God and establish himself as deity. I'm sure you will agree that we don't have to teach our children to be defiant, to be selfish, it comes naturally because of their sin nature. Every child would be king or queen of their own little kingdom if we allowed them to be so. They would use every means at their disposal, even murder, to gain their throne.

So this is who we are as people. Satan understands this very well and he capitalizes on it. Satan offers man a myriad of enticements in his world system that will certainly incite us to sin. The Apostle John calls this all that is in the world in 1 John 2:16, which includes the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. The lust of the flesh refers to all that is ignoble, all that is shameful and immoral, all those cravings in our evil heart. And the lust of the eyes describes the worldly enticements that we can see that cause us to become dissatisfied, cause us to become covetous or idolatrous, seducing us to thoughts and actions that violate God's will and bring misery to our souls.

Enticements that create an alternate reality that allows us to escape into worlds that don't even exist; that distract us from what is real and causes us to spend our time and money on things that are eternally insignificant and prevent us for seeing the world like it really is, like the pickpocket that goes, "Oh, look at that!" and as you look at that, he takes your

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wallet. Like television, video games, new Pokemon phenomena that is sweeping the world.

It's amazing to me to see how all of this works. I was thinking about that. We have 3,322 unborn infants that are murdered every day in the United States of America, violently killed. We have the LGBTQ gaining ground with their vile perversions. By the way, I didn't know what the Q stood for, maybe you don't, maybe you do. It stands for either questioning or queer; according to GLAD, anything that stands outside the dominate narrative. So we have these people gaining ground in our culture. We have domestic terrorists and racists killing police. We have leaders in our country flooding our nation with Muslims who want to kill us. Folks, the world is being prepared for the antichrist and the pre-kingdom judgments that are going to come upon it and things are going to happen that are absolutely unimaginable and what do people do? By the millions, they're running around with cellphones trying to kill mythical creatures and doing battle with other players for supremacy. And of course, there's a myriad of other distractions. It's almost insanity, isn't it? I think of Ephesians 5 where Paul says in verse 15, "be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Well, that was a little rabbit trail. That's the lust of the eyes and there are so many other things that go with that. But then there is the boastful pride of life. That refers to man's inherent arrogance. It refers to our demand to be first, to be dominant; to elevate our will above others; to rule our life rather than submit to the rule of God. And even as believers, we all struggle with this. We all struggle with this and therefore we're vulnerable to what John says, "the things of the world," and for this reason he warns, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Now, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, there is perhaps no greater example in all of Scripture of what it means to not love the world and not be dominated and ruled by the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life than in the life of the Apostle Paul. Obviously he battled his fleshly lusts. We know that, he admits to that. Look at the end of Romans 7, for example. He struggled with the same kinds of things that we struggle with and yet he refused to allow pride to rule his heart. It's interesting, even in 2 Corinthians 12 we learn that there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, to keep him from what? Exalting himself. Why was that necessary? Because his proclivity would be to exalt himself, right? And God said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you. My power is perfected in weakness." To which he responded, "Most gladly therefore I would rather boast about my weaknesses that the power of Christ may dwell in me."

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Paul was a man of unparalleled humility. He was a true shepherd of the sheep, one of my greatest heroes, and in our text this morning, we can see a portrait of humility, what it really looks like. But I must warn you from the outset that what we are about to learn is so contrary to what we see in our world, in our culture, and what we praise, what we applaud in our society, that it's going to seem a bit bizarre. You will not see these godly virtues in the heroes of our culture: politicians, athletes, actors, actresses, rock stars, all the types of people that the world tend to celebrate and applaud. Moreover because of your pride and my pride, there is a real good chance that these virtues are not going to manifest themselves to the degree that you wish they would and I confess as I meditated upon these truths this last week, that was certainly true for me.

Let me give them to you and then we'll read the text and examine it carefully. A humble slave of Christ like the Apostle Paul will 1. Recognize his utter dependence on God. 2. He will make the Gospel his number 1 priority. 3. He will exercise biblical discernment and boldly warn others. 4. He will encourage others with God's faithfulness. And finally, he will have a passion for others to enjoy and emulate Christ. Now, I will submit to you that those five characteristics will not be a part of the platform of either of our political parties because they are of the world, this will not be the testimony of our celebrated athletes and Hollywood celebrities, but these will be the priorities of the redeemed who choose to live in humble submission to the King of kings and long to see him face to face, long for his return.

Now, let's go back and understand the context of what's going on here. After correcting their misunderstanding concerning the day of the Lord and then comforting them in their persecution, reminding them of the gift of salvation that awaits all who have been saved by God's grace, he now introduces the closing portion of his second epistle to the Thessalonians and here's what he says in our text this morning, chapter 3 of 2 Thessalonians.

1 Finally, brethren, 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, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. 4 We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

First of all, I want to focus on how he recognized his utter dependence on God and we see that in the first phrase there of chapter 3, verse 1, he says, "Finally, brethren, pray for

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us." Now, here's why that phrase is so remarkable. You must understand that Paul was a brilliant man, a brilliant theologian. He had been trained by the most prestigious and erudite men, rabbis, in the world and better yet, according to Galatians 1, we read that he was trained in the Gospel in Arabia by the Lord Jesus Christ himself where he received divine revelation from him. This was a man of unsurpassed intellect; a giant among church planters and missionaries. And although his critics said in the New Testament that his physical presence was altogether unimpressive and feeble and his rhetorical skills were contemptible, he was nevertheless a very persuasive preacher and teacher, and he must have had enormous physical strength to be able to travel the hundreds, even maybe thousands of miles that he travels by foot through all of the difficult terrain in his missionary journeys, and to be able to withstand all of the torture on his body. He was a resourceful man who worked hard to even supplement his income by making tents. A bold man that would proclaim the Gospel to hostile audiences. A man that endured unimaginable persecution including physical torture. And yet despite all of this, think about it, he asks these baby Christians in Thessalonica to pray for him. I mean, you talk about humility.

Pray for Silas and Timothy as well. Pray for us. The grammar indicates that he's asking them to pray constantly, continually. He asked the same thing in 1 Thessalonians 5:25. We know that he made the same request in his epistle to the Romans, to the saints in Ephesus, to the saints in Corinth, and even in Colossians he revealed why this was important. He said there in Colossians 1:29, "I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me." You see, Paul had no confidence in his own resources. He had no confidence in his flesh, in his natural talents, in his own abilities to somehow make life work, especially in the context of living out the Gospel. He recognized his utter dependence on God.

Beloved, serving Christ in the manner Paul did is the most demanding job in all of the world. If you don't believe it, just roll up your sleeves and get involved in this kind of ministry. The world will hate you. Jesus warned that that would happen. Many times your biological family will hate you. Your friends will leave you, will mock you. Some in the church will hate you. It may cost you everything but please understand that genuine, biblical, intentional, Gospel ministry will require far more of you than you are able to give based upon your own resources. A great education is absolutely essential to pastoral ministries. Having a good intellect, a strong mind, will and body is crucial but, folks, when you enter into the kingdom of darkness to do battle with hardened sinners who serve their father the devil, the prince of the power of the air, the father of lies, the ruler of the demons, when you enter into that background, you will discover that your resources are utterly insufficient. It's like trying to do battle with a battleship when all you have is a pea-shooter. For this reason Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:3, "For though we

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walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh," in other words, though we've just got these human limitations, he says, "for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God." You see, folks, a supernatural enemy requires a supernatural weaponry. A humble slave of Christ is going to recognize this and he will put on the whole armor of God but he will also wield the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God and he will march into battle on his knees, utterly dependent upon God. Moreover, because of all of this, he will ask others to pray for him.

Do you do that? When was the last time you came to one of your brothers and sisters in Christ and said, "Can I talk with you? I want you to pray for me in this great battle for the truth." That is a mark of humility. You know, if you're not engaged in the battle, you're not going to see this need, but if you decide to get serious about the Great Commission and join the fight, your pride will soon be exposed and in utter humility you will fall on your face and plead for God's mercy and his help and ask others to pray for you.

So a humble man will not only recognize his utter dependence on God but, secondly, make the Gospel his number 1 priority. Notice how he went on to say, "pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you." Well, you notice what he did not pray for, he did not say, "Pray that we will be more popular with the world. Pray that we will have more people fill up our church. Pray for us to really develop a world global ministry empire. Pray that we can meet all of the needs of the poor. Pray that we can somehow bring about social change and social justice." No, none of those things are a priority of a humble slave of Christ. He's all about bringing glory to God through the spread of the Gospel. Nothing, dear friends, nothing in life is more important than that.

"Pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly." His request, by the way, echoes the words of Psalm 147:15. There we read, "He sends forth His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly." But it would appear that Paul seems to also blend the imagery of that Psalm with the contemporary imagery of the athletic games that were common in their culture. You know how in the New Testament Paul commonly used running a race as a metaphor for the apostolic Gospel mission, so in essence he's saying, "Pray that the Gospel will spread quickly without any interference; that the souls of men will be saved and bring glory to God." That's what's at stake here. In Ephesians 6:19, he says, "pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel." You wouldn't think that Paul struggled with that but evidently he did, struggled with being bold. You know, it's easy to

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be bold when you're among friends. It's a whole different ballgame when your audience are those who hate you.

Notice again, "pray that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly," but secondly, "and be glorified," he says, "just as it did also with you." You see, this is why he was so motivated. He had seen how the Holy Spirit had come along and utterly transformed these Jews and Gentiles from all of these various backgrounds; how they received the word in humility, even in the face of violent opposition. You will recall in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, there he says, "we constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus." And you will recall that they even had Scythians that had come to Christ. Remember? I mean, these were the worst of the worst of the barbarians. These were ancient ISIS, okay? These people had come to Christ. So this is why he asked them to pray for him and for his co-laborers, he wants more people to hear and believe that God might be glorified.

You know, folks, this is such a magnificent thing to behold. I always marvel when I see how God draws one of his elect to himself and a person hears the Gospel and they're just absolutely brought to their face. You know, the vast majority of people hear it and scoff. It's utter folly to them. They will even kill to silence the message. But some will believe. The most violent hate-mail that I receive come from Muslims and from homosexuals, but some individuals from both groups have been gloriously saved by God's grace. I remember one homosexual man, I think I told you about him before, who had been listening to the expositions that I did out of Revelation and I'm sure God uses many other people, I'm certainly not trying to put a feather in my hat at all, but he had been listening and during that time, he was gloriously saved out of the homosexual escort business in London. Two years later, he calls me early on a Sunday morning to thank me for my ministry. He continues to listen. He's now in the process of getting married to a young woman and he's in Bible school. I mean, it's an amazing thing to hear these stories and I could tell you stories of Muslims that have come to Christ, and people from all kinds of false religions. Some of you. I mean, frankly all of us who know Christ were saved out of some terrible deceptive bondage, even in our own hearts and this is what motivated him, "Oh you dear people, pray for us. I want the Gospel, the word to spread rapidly and be glorified just as it did also with you."

Thirdly, a humble servant of Christ will exercise biblical discernment and boldly warn others. Notice in verse 2, he's saying here, "pray also that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith," in other words, not all believe in the Gospel. Basically he's saying here, "Pray for our safety. People want to kill us." And in

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this request you can really see the apostle's ability to not only discern evil men, the perverse and evil men, but also here implicit in this is a warning to them about the existence of these kind of people even in the church, and when we pray for such things, we become much more aware of them, don't we? He's obviously concerned about the forces who oppose the Gospel and those who preach it and live it. In 2 Corinthians 1:8, he rehearses some of this. He says, "For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life." Have you ever been that way before, serving Christ? You just don't know if you can go on. He went on to say, "indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves." Oh, that's what God was up to, so that you won't trust in yourself, "but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many." There's the power of prayer. A humble man is going to understand the need for this. In 2 Corinthians 11:23, he reminds them of his imprisonments. He was, "beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes." I mean, his back had to have looked like spaghetti. "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. 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 wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches."

Beloved, don't think for one moment that just because you believe in the Gospel and you joyfully embrace it that others are going to do the same thing. Most of the world is going to hate you. Jesus warned that the world will hate us, right? Because they hated him, and if we truly confess Christ before men, many are going to rise up against us. Jesus warned in Matthew 10, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household." Beloved, I deal with this probably every day as well as many of the rest of the elders. This is part of living out the Gospel when you have family members that will not embrace it. And frankly, I confess that I fear what lies ahead for the true church in America. On every front politically and culturally, we are seeing a growing hostility toward biblical Christianity. The phony cultural Christianity, they have no problem with that but biblical Christianity, oh. We see corruption in our leaders. I believe it's just a matter of time that much of what we preach is going to be outlawed. In

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fact, I've been reading some of what the real agenda is behind all of this gay rights movement, and one theme that comes up over and over again is their desire to absolutely dismantle the institution of marriage. In fact, activists openly admit that, "The institution of marriage should not exist." And because they demand cultural acceptance, they're aggressively trying to force the church to accept them through legislation.

You know, this is a brilliant satanic strategy. You stop and think about it, there are only two institutions that God ordained and promised to bless: marriage and the church. I mean, we already see what false teachers and compromise is doing to the church, it has basically eviscerated the truths that would give it power but now to also destroy marriage, two institutions designed to manifest the covenantal love and faithfulness of God towards his people. Through legislation, I believe the time is coming very soon when you will eventually see evangelical churches, schools, colleges, universities, all Christian institutions, losing their non-profit status because they refuse to accept the abominations of homosexuality being advanced by the politically correct elite. I fear for the country that our children are going to inherit. I just pray that the Lord comes quickly. And beloved, I would plead with you to pray for me; to pray for my family. We are threatened constantly. Pray for the elders of this church. It's going to get worse. Pray for yourselves. Pray for the church, that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men for not all have faith.

And once again in these prayer requests, we can just witness this selfless humility of this faithful apostle. You see, he's not in ministry to advance himself. It's almost laughable to say that, isn't it? He's not in ministry to build some type of a ministry empire. He doesn't care anything about fortune and fame. He is clearly devoted to being a faithful servant, a faithful slave of Christ, and so as a humble slave, he will recognize his utter dependence on God, make the Gospel his number 1 priority, exercise biblical discernment and boldly warn others and, number 4: he is going to encourage others with God's faithfulness. Notice in verses 3 and 4, he says, "But the Lord is faithful." Boy, that's coming from his heart. How well he knew, how faithful God was, how faithful God is.

"But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command." Here again, you see his deep pastoral concern for the saints and although he's writing in Corinth because he had to flee for his life from Thessalonica, he knows what they're having to endure with all of the persecution up there in Thessalonica. Timothy had told him and so he's concerned for them and so he comes along here and he encourages them by reminding them of God's faithfulness. You know, we all struggle under the weight of the world and persecution, even as it mounts, and sometimes when we feel that pressure, we can find ourselves doubting God's goodness, doubting his word,

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wondering if he's just abandoned us. But isn't it wonderful, the Lord knows our frame, that we are but dust. He knows our frailties. He knows our limitations. He knows our breaking point and he is faithful to meet us in our time of need.

So we all need to be reminded of this so the Spirit of God inspires his apostle to remind them and all of us that the Lord is faithful. He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. Paul said this as well, remember in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is," here it is, "faithful," God is faithful, "who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." Peter said a similar thing in 1 Peter 4:19, he spoke of, "those who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right." In other words, as our Creator, God knows what is best; he knows best how to meet the needs of his creation. And Jesus is our supreme example in all of this. Peter noted in 1 Peter 2:23, "and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." So Paul comes along here now unconcerned about himself and he encourages these suffering saints, reminding them of God's faithfulness, "He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one."

You know, proud Christians don't do this kind of encouragement. Have you ever thought about that? They're too busy thinking of their own lives, thinking of themselves and, frankly, they've never, or at least seldom, experienced the faithfulness of God to strengthen them and protect them from the evil one because they're too busy living for themselves to get involved in the battle, in the fight, where they will have to depend upon him and experience his faithfulness, experience him strengthening them and protecting them. You know, there are times when I feel my knees beginning to buckle under the weight of ministry, though nothing like these saints ever experienced, and you know, I've seen the Lord prove himself so powerful on my behalf so many times. I've seen how faithful he is to come along and to give strength and to give clarity and encouragement. You know, one of the things that I have discovered in every situation like that, there is one thread of commonality and that is: he always brings some humble battle-hardened saint to encourage me. Some of them are still alive and a whole lot of them are dead but he does that through their words, through their example. Someone who recognized his utter dependence on God; who made the Gospel his number 1 priority in life; who exercised biblical discernment and boldly warned others; who encouraged others with God's faithfulness. Such was the Apostle Paul. He had experienced that faithfulness time and time again.

These are the type of people that I want to speak into my life, especially when I've had to endure the vicious hostilities of someone like Alexander, the coppersmith. Do you

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remember him? Remember Alexander the coppersmith? In 2 Timothy 4, beginning in verse 14, Paul speaks of him and he says, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm." Boy, does that ring a bell. We've all had those people. He says, "the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching." Then he says this, "At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them." But I love what he says next, "But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

But notice what else Paul said to those saints in Thessalonica in verse 4, he says, "We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command." We all need this kind of encouragement, don't we? "Hey, you know, I can see how God is at work in you. I can see your obedience, your growth, your love for Christ." Remember in 1 Thessalonians 1, verses 5 and following, he commented on what God had done. He said, "for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction." I mean, this is just an amazing thing to witness. He went on to say, "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God." No wonder he would say to them therefore here in verse 4, "We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command." That you will continue to be obedient. That he's going to continue to work in you. You could almost hear him saying Philippians 1:6 there, "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

You know, here at Calvary Bible Church, we have every stage of spiritual maturity represented and that's wonderful. That's all part of God's plan. Some of you are like the saints that Paul described in 1 Corinthians 3: men of flesh, babes in Christ, able only to receive milk to drink, not solid food. You just can't handle some of the deeper things of the word of God. Why? Because you are still fleshly, Paul said. You have an attitude that pursues self rather than God. You're still caught up in the world and as a result he says you are filled with jealousy and you cause strife and you walk like mere men who are unsaved. You know, this is real common, especially among young people. My goodness, I look back at my life and I was the poster boy for that. But do you know what? If you

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# Portrait of Humility

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5  
**Preached on:** Sunday, July 24, 2016

truly know Christ, I am confident that God will continue to do his work of sanctification in you and that's what Paul is saying to these baby Christians. I mean, they had all kinds of problems going on but, oh, he had seen what God had done.

But may I warn you of something? Babes in Christ are no match for Alexander the coppersmith and the world is full of those kind of people. You young people, you wait until you have a professor that knows error better than you know truth. You wait until you read position papers as I have had to do in front of a panel of esteemed, unsaved, religious professors and they rip you apart and do everything they possibly can to publicly humiliate you. You wait until your classmates join in with the laughter. Wait until your family tells you to get out of their life. Not if but when something like this happens and it's going to happen to all of us, know this: the Lord is faithful and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. "We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command."

Well, finally the humble slave of Christ will have a passion for others to enjoy and emulate Christ. As we close with this this morning, bear in mind that Paul is living in poverty, he's enduring unimaginable persecution. He's dealing with the same kind of sicknesses and viruses and all the stuff that we deal with only there's no doctor, no hospital for him. He's just trying to survive and yet he is absolutely content with what God is up to in his life. There is no complaining here. With no thought of himself, notice what he says to them, verse 5, "May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ." I mean, folks, this is the kind of desire that flows from the well of selfless love. The proud have no such desire. They don't even think of these things. Paul knew by their lives that they were part of God's elect. Remember what we studied last week in chapter 2, verse 13, "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth." So in other words, Paul now, because of his confidence in their election and confidence in the fact that God is going to be faithful with them, he prays that the Lord would direct them. The term literally means "to make straight; to remove any obstacles that might impede progress." He wants the Lord to direct them for two reasons: direct your hearts into the love of God, and secondly, direct your hearts into the steadfastness of Christ. What he means there by "direct your hearts into the love of God," he's wanting the Lord to cause them to really reflect upon the character of God's love and his commitment to them come what may. And then the idea of "directing their hearts into the steadfastness," or literally, "the patience of Christ," he's saying, "I want him to cause you to emulate the perseverance of Christ that you witnessed while he was here on earth during his suffering on your behalf. This is what I want for you." And he's also reminding them that they should expect it.

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Peter described this as well, 1 Peter 4:12. I want to wrap this up this morning with these thoughts and, by the way, I offer this especially to those of you who are listening in foreign countries where you're fearing for your life. Some of you have described what has happened to some of your family members and my heart breaks for you. But here's what Peter said along this same line, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."

So, dear friends, here's a portrait of humility, a picture of the character and the conduct of the Apostle Paul that we should all emulate. We should be people that recognize our utter dependency upon God, that make the Gospel our number 1 priority, that exercise biblical discernment and boldly warn others, that encourage others with respect to God's faithfulness, and to be a people that has a passion for others to enjoy and emulate Christ, and as a result of this, God will bless us and empower us. Do you realize that this type of attitude, this type of character, this type of conduct, gets God's attention? Can you imagine that? That God sees this and he takes great notice of it? We see this in numerous passages but especially in Isaiah 66:2. I don't have this on the board for you here but in that passage he says this, "But to this one I will look," in other words, here's the kind of person that gets my undivided attention, "To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." Let's pray that we would all be humble and contrite of spirit and tremble at his word.

Let's pray together.

*Father, thank you for these truths that speak so directly, so practically into our lives. Thank you for the example of the Apostle Paul whom you saved by your grace, whom you sanctified. Thank you for your word. May it bear much fruit in each of our lives. And Lord, for those who do not know Christ, Lord, perhaps some of those who hate the very thought of the Gospel, such were some of us and I pray that you will save them even as you have saved them. We trust you to that end and we thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.*

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at [otcr.org](http://otcr.org).

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