

A FITTING BENEDICTION
--2nd THESSALONIANS 3:16-18--

INTRODUCTION:

Two weeks ago, we looked at verses 6-15 of chapter three in which Paul deals with the problem of those who were refusing to work and instructed the church on their responsibility to discipline them. Then the apostle Paul expressed the desire of his heart for them as he closes this letter with a prayerful benediction to God for them that would encourage and energize them to grow in Christ. In this benediction Paul pleads with God to grant four blessings that are absolutely necessary for spiritual growth leading to maturity. He asks God to bless them with God's peace, God's strength, God's truth, and God's grace.

I. GOD'S PEACE (2nd Thessalonians 3:16)

- a. The first blessing that Paul desires God would grant to the Thessalonian believers is God's _____.
- b. _____ peace, true spiritual peace is completely different from the fleeting and fragile human peace.
- c. First, it is of God, in other words it is divine, coming from the _____ of peace Himself. (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Isaiah 9:6; Ephesians 2:14; Galatians 5:22; Romans 14:17)
- d. Second, God's peace is a _____ from God, it is with great pleasure that God graciously grants His peace to those who belong to Him. (John 14:27; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)
- e. A third feature of God's peace that He gives to believers is that it is _____ available.
- f. Finally, a fourth feature of the peace that God continually gives to His own is that it exists and is available in every _____ . (Philippians 1:6)

II. GOD'S STRENGTH (2nd Thessalonians 3:16)

- a. Paul ends verse 16 with the phrase, "*The Lord be with you _____!*" (2 Thessalonians 3:16b, NASB95) (Psalm 46:1; Matthew 28:20)

- b. First, it is God's strength that enables us to _____ temptation. (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- c. Second, we need God's strength to _____ against Satan and his demon hordes. (Ephesians 6:10-13)
- d. Third, it is only by God's strength that we can effectively _____ Him. (Colossians 1:29; Hebrews 13:20-21)
- e. Fourth, as believers we need God's strength to _____. (Jude 24)
- f. Fifth, it is only by God's strength that we can _____ trials. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)
- g. Sixth, it is only by God's strength that we can effectively _____ the gospel with this lost world. (Acts 1:8)
- h. Philippians 4:13 really summarizes this need that we have for God's _____ in all we do.

III. GOD'S TRUTH (2nd Thessalonians 3:17)

- a. In verse 17 Paul interrupts his _____ which he will pick up again in verse 18.
- b. Paul was very concerned that the Thessalonians have God's _____.
- c. But to prevent forgery and affirm the letter's authenticity Paul would personally sign it with his own distinctive _____.
- d. Paul was deeply concerned that what the Thessalonians were receiving was the _____. (John 1:14, 17; 17:8; 14:6, 17; 15:26; 16:13)
- e. Paul wanted the church in Thessalonica to be the _____ and _____ of the truth.

IV. GOD'S GRACE (2nd Thessalonians 3:18)

- a. Returning now to his benediction Paul closes his prayer and this letter by expressing his desire that all who have put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation continue to experience God's _____ in their lives.
- b. Again, God's grace is His undeserved goodness and blessing granted to those who in no way _____ it. (Eph. 2:8-9)

CONCLUSION:

There is no greater life to live than the Christian life lived to the glory of God. To live that kind of life requires all the understanding, obedience, commitment, dedication, and effort that any believer can give. But all of that would be nothing and would be impossible without the peace, strength, truth, and grace that only God can provide. As we depart from this book let us do so knowing that God's peace is available continually in all circumstances and it is not dependent on us, but on God's sovereign control in our lives. Let us live for God in His strength because our strength will fail us over and over, but God's strength is always available and there is an inexhaustible supply available to us. Let us hold fast to the truth that is supplied to us from God's Word so that we are grounded firmly in the faith, and we are no longer "*children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men.*" (Ephesians 4:14b, NASB95) Hold fast to the truth. Finally, remember to enjoy God's grace in everything that you do, and know that His grace is sufficient for anything we may face in our day to day lives.