

# God is Faithful

## II Thessalonians 3:1-3

### Introduction

Dr. Erica Komisar – a family therapist wrote an article for the WSJ [2019] - - on the importance of religious values and beliefs for the emotional stability of children.

‘As a therapist, I’m often asked to explain why depression and anxiety are so common among children and adolescents. One of the most important explanations—and perhaps the most neglected—is declining interest in religion. This cultural shift already has proved disastrous for millions of vulnerable young people.’

‘A 2018 study in the American Journal of Epidemiology examined how being raised in a family with religious or spiritual beliefs affects mental health. Harvard researchers examined religious involvement . . . of approximately 5,000 people . . .’

**‘The result? Children or teens who reported attending a religious service at least once per week scored higher on psychological well-being measurements and had lower risks of mental illness. Weekly attendance was associated with higher rates of volunteering, a sense of mission, forgiveness, and lower probabilities of drug use and early sexual initiation. Pity then that the U.S. has seen a 20% decrease in attendance at formal religious services in the past 20 years, according to a Gallup report earlier this year.’**

There is empirical data on the difference a religious upbringing makes to the lives of children - - - but that difference is often not noted or recognized by secularists - - - who seem more intent on acts of hostility towards religious believers - - - in particular those who practice the Christian faith

A few examples:

- A teacher in NJ was suspended for giving a student a Bible
- A football coach in Washington placed on leave for saying a prayer on field at the end of a game
- A fire-chief in Atlanta fired for self-publishing a book defending Christian moral teaching
- A marine court-martialed for pasting a Bible verse above her desk
- Student groups like InterVarsity – being kicked off of campuses in the U.S

Several years ago – there was a debate held at Arizona State University - between Christian apologist William Lane Craig and Douglas Jesseph, a professor at the University of North Carolina. The Debate’s topic was: ‘Does God exist?’

The crowd seemed to be evenly divided – and the debate did not seem to move the needle with too many people. Then one student stepped up to the microphone to ask his question.

Student: 'Can each of you tell us what difference your worldview makes to you in your own personal lives?'

Dr. Craig said that, as a philosopher, [with 2 PhDs] he had searched in vain for meaning and hope in life and found it only after he came to faith in Jesus Christ.

William Lane Craig: 'I came to know joy for the first time. I can't help but want to share the wonder of Jesus Christ wherever I am welcomed to give reason for the hope within me.'

Professor Jesseph then responded that if he had to share his hope with someone – he wouldn't have much to say.

Jesseph: 'I'd probably just go home, put on the Grateful Dead, and play chess with my computer.'

Author Kelly Kullberg was present at the debate and she said that after Professor Jesseph made his remarks, there was dead silence. Students were stunned to hear the profound difference from the two speakers. They understood – perhaps for the first time – that there is a connection between what one believes and the actual living of one's life.

\*\*\* It does matter what one believes

Man is made for a relationship with his Creator - - - fellowship with God has been broken – that is our problem whether we recognize it or not

The fall of humanity - - has left in its wake all kinds of disastrous results - - - the original warning included that of death – we also find alienation from and hostility towards God / bondage to sin / addictions / immoralities / violence / greed / depression / anxieties / hatreds / evil

God has provided a remedy to sinful man's plight in the person of His Son - - - Jesus Christ - - - who took our sins to Calvary – taking our place up on the cross

All who trust in Jesus – find redemption in Him

But - to quote the Apostle Paul – 'not all have faith'

How shall we live in a world with competing ideologies / worldviews / some of them hostile to the Christian faith?

The Apostle Paul gives us valuable instruction here

## I. Sweet Hour of Prayer - v. 1

Paul comes to his final instructions to the Thessalonians

He begins with a call to prayer

We are in a spiritual war

Sinful man's only hope is that God open the eyes of his heart – and that he come to see his own wretchedness – turn to the Savior

Romans 3:11 - 'There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God.'

Isaiah 53:6 - 'All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way . . .'

There is a natural hostility to the gospel and to God in this world

In fact – Erica Komisar – who wrote the WSJ piece on religious belief and children - - - is part of a professional body that is routinely skeptical of the Christian faith

We might wonder how she was able to write such an enthusiastic defense of theism in a secular newspaper

Well – as she continues - - - she takes away with the left hand what she gave with the right

'Nihilism is fertilizer for anxiety and depression, and being "realistic" is overrated. The belief in God—in a protective and guiding figure to rely on when times are tough—is one of the best kinds of support for kids in an increasingly pessimistic world. That's only one reason, from a purely mental-health perspective, to pass down a faith tradition.'

'I am often asked by parents, "How do I talk to my child about death if I don't believe in God or heaven?" My answer is always the same: "Lie." The idea that you simply die and turn to dust may work for some adults, but it doesn't help children. Belief in heaven helps them grapple with this tremendous and incomprehensible loss. In an age of broken families, distracted parents, school violence and nightmarish global-warming predictions, imagination plays a big part in children's ability to cope.'

i.e. – you don't need to believe yourself - - - just lie to your kids – tell them there is a God - - and He's pretty cool – that will help them cope with all the uncertainties of life

That hardly sounds like a rousing endorsement of religious belief – or the Christian faith

We note: there is this reluctance to follow her own data to the truth it is pointing to

Man needs God

We need a relationship with God

We need God for moral values

We need God – to set us free from slavery to sin

We need God as a refuge in the storm

To go thru life not believing in God - - - is to ignore our fundamental status as creatures living in God's world / to ignore our human sinfulness / to ignore our need of the Savior

How do we overcome the world's hostility to God?

Paul calls us to pray - - pray that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly – and be glorified

The word of the Lord - - - comes up against a wall of human hostility towards God and the bible

Philosopher Thomas Nagel of NYU expressed his outlook this way [who has taught courses on ethics]:

Thomas Nagel: 'I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and naturally hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that.'

There is the hostility

Anon.: 'There are none so deaf as those who do not want to hear.'

Oftentimes this is linked to one's moral values or lack thereof - - - - what kind of changes would be involved with following Christ?

Jesus and Paul talk about turning from sin - - - repentance / confessing sin / etc.

When you embrace the Christian position - - - you hear verses like

**I Thess. 4:3 - 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.'**

For some people – that is reason enough – to hope or wish that the Christian faith is not true - - - because they don't want a God telling them how to handle their moral life

Nena and George O'Neill wrote a popular book back in the 70's giving the green light to immoral relationships - - titled – 'Open Marriage: a new lifestyle for couples'

In the book they approved of extramarital affairs / one-night stands / sex with whomever you please

They expressed their belief that the Judeo-Christian values pertaining to marriage were outdated – and they had a better model - - [book has sold over 35 million copies] / 40 weeks on NYT bestseller list - - yet – just five years after the book was published - - - Nena O’Neill completely changed her mind.

Why? They had heard from couples that tried their advice and experimented with consensual adultery and found the results to be disastrous. She recognized there is a reason why the bible says, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’

God created us - - - He gave us ten commandments to communicate and codify the moral law we are to live within - - - when we step outside the moral law - - we always invite problems

That is how sin is expressed

We need new hearts to believe the gospel – to begin following God and His truth

Paul: pray for the advance of the gospel

God is the one who can cause the word of the Lord to run rapidly

He is the one who opens blind eyes / softens hard hearts / draws the sinner unto Himself

How many prayers went up for your salvation? By parents / grandparents / ss teachers / etc.

\*\*\* Have you prayed for someone this week? / that their hearts would be open to God and His gospel?

Think of the some of the unbelievers in your circle of relationships

Pray for missionaries / bible translators – pray for the church / Christian pulpits to be faithful to proclaim God’s truth

Michael Youssef: ‘Satan understands these truths far better than we do. He understands the power that believers receive from having a continual two-way communion with God. That’s why he works overtime to distract us, to discourage us, to prevent us from building a habit of continual prayer. Satan does not want us to have that kind of continual intimacy with God . . . so he does everything possible to disrupt our prayer life.’

## II. Spiritual Conflict - v. 2

Here Paul refers to the spiritual conflict - - - between light and darkness / good and evil

Not all have faith

Paul asks for prayer for himself and the others apostles - - - to be delivered from perverse and evil men

Paul had enemies

There was Alexander the Coppersmith

**II Timothy 4:14 - 'Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.'**

\*\*\* 'You can tell a lot about a person by who their enemies are.'

Many people of God had to deal with enemies

- Daniel – certain enemies in the government who passed a wicked law – Daniel 6
- Esther – Haman hated Mordecai
- Cain and Abel
- David - Saul
- Elijah – Ahab and Jezebel
- Moses – Pharaoh
- Jesus – the Pharisees

**I Corinthians 16:9 - 'For a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.'**

Wait a minute Paul! Wide door / many adversaries!

Doesn't the presence of adversaries mean – turn around and go the other way?

Not – if you're Paul!

Paul in carrying out his obedience to God - - - did come into contact with hostile foes / adversaries – and so will you

He was arrested several times - - - given 39 lashes - 5 times / etc.

Once he was stoned and left for dead / once had to escape a town being let down in a basket on the wall

**II Cor. 11:23 - 'beaten times without number'**

Paul says he can't even count how many times he has been beaten

Understand: If you set out to obey God in your life with any degree of consistency - - you will run up against obstacles

There is Satan / there are evil people

Not all have faith - - - Jesus said the world will be filled with both wheat and tares unto the end of the age

People will spout out all kinds of arguments as to why they do not believe - - - but it generally comes down to the heart - - - they love their sin too much to believe in the Savior

John 3:19 - 'this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.'

When people reject the truth - - that leaves a void in their life – they will fill it in with something – some false religion / some false god / some cause

Kelly Kullberg says that she once attended a women's session that was held in the University Chapel of Harvard Divinity School. The meeting was called, 'The full moon circle'. The group described themselves as a neo-pagan, pre-Christian, eco-feminist Wiccan society.

The chapel was packed. The women chanted to the spirits, worshiped the full moon, and attempted to reach their dead ancestors. She adds: 'It was shocking to see these bright, educated women acting as if they were unenlightened pagans.'

Where truth is rejected - - - error and deception rushes to fill the void

### III. God is Faithful - v. 3

God is faithful

Grudem: 'God's faithfulness means that God will always do what He has said and fulfill what He has promised. He can be relied upon, and He will never prove unfaithful to those who trust what He has said. Indeed, the essence of true faith is taking God at His word and relying on Him to do as he has promised.'

God can be counted on for certain things

If we look to Him - - - we know that His power is sufficient for every need

D. Edmond Hiebert: 'In spite of the wicked and pernicious opposition of satanic forces, the Lord's purpose and plan will ultimately triumph.'

Matthew 16:13-18

The gates of hades will not prevail – Satan cannot destroy the church - - - he has tried

He can put to death a William Tyndale - - - but not until he finished translating the NT into English

He could have the apostles arrested / beaten

**II Tim. 2:9 - 'The word of God is not imprisoned.'**

John MacArthur has taken a lot of flak for holding services in CA - - he has basically said – you can come and arrest me if you want

God is faithful to His people

**Romans 16:20 - 'The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.'**

It's because of the faithfulness of God – we can be saved

**I John 1:9 - 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'** [kjv]

God has pledged Himself to save all who come to Him thru Jesus Christ

**John 6:37 - 'All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.'**

## **Conclusion**

Shirley Dobson reflected upon the faithfulness of God to her and her family

'When Focus on the Family was in its early stages and our children were young, my husband Jim, traveled often. I had grown accustomed to his absences and was never really frightened while he was away. Except once.'

'One night about 2 am I awoke with a start. I was afraid and didn't know why. For a few minutes – it seemed like hours – I lay in bed worrying. Finally, I forced myself out of bed and sank to my knees.

'Lord – I don't know why I'm so frightened – I ask you to watch over our home and to protect our family. Send your guardian angel to be with us.' I climbed back into bed and in about a half hour was back asleep.

The next morning our babysitter who lived across the street came running over. 'Mrs. Dobson – did you hear what happened? A burglar robbed your next-door neighbor's house last night!'

It was true – a thief had broken in – entered the couple’s bedroom while they slept and snatched the husband’s wallet from a dresser. The burglar escaped with the family’s vacation money – about \$ 500. The police determined the time of the robbery – about 2 am. My mind reeled at the thought. If a burglar wanted to break into our house – I said – he would probably try to get in thru the bathroom window near our children’s bedrooms. There’s a hedge and he’d be shielded from view. Let’s go look. ‘

When we looked at the window on the other side of the house – we saw that the screen was bent and the window sill splintered – someone had indeed tried to break in!

I am convinced that God protected us that night. I was surprised but I should not have been. For years, Jim and I had prayed and fasted – trusting God to protect our family. We knew God powerfully works thru prayer. On that dark early morning – my trust was tested in a frantic moment – and **God proved faithful.**’

God is faithful  
Seek Him in prayer  
Pray that the word of the Lord run rapidly

If we confess our sins – He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness