
a ***Grace Notes*** course

2 Thessalonians

an expositional study
by Dr. Grant Richison

Lesson 10

2 Thessalonians 3

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2 Thessalonians 3:1

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you..."

The first five verses are a prayer for stability in the lives of the Thessalonians.

Finally,

Paul now begins his closing remarks for 2 Thessalonians.

brethren, pray for us,

The word "finally" introduces the last major section of the letter. Paul asked the Thessalonians to pray for his gospel team. He knew his need for prayer. He asks for prayer in two categories: 1) the advance of the gospel (v.1) and 2) protection from evil men (v.2).

Paul asks for prayer at the close of five of his epistles (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:2,3; Ephesians 6:18,19; 1 Thessalonians 5:25).

that

The purpose of the Thessalonians prayer is that Paul's gospel team might advance the gospel in two ways: 1) that the "word of the Lord may run swiftly" and 2) that it might be "glorified."

the word of the Lord may run swiftly

Paul's primary concern in prayer was for the expansion of the gospel. This is a prayer that the word of the Lord would advance unhindered and without obstacles.

The word "run" means to proceed quickly and without hindrance. To describe the free and rapid progress of "the word of the Lord," Paul sets forth the metaphor of a runner in a race, implying swiftness or effort to attain an end. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Galatians 5:7; Philippians 2:16).

Paul writes both 1 and 2 Thessalonians from Corinth, a major port city in southern Greece. It was the Paris of antiquity. Paul went there with his gospel artillery (Acts 17,18). His team needed prayer for such a daunting task. He

needed intercessory prayer to penetrate that pleasure-loving city. God answered the prayer of the Thessalonians.

"Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18: 8).

The Thessalonians get some of the credit for the Corinthians coming to Christ. With little fanfare, they went to prayer for their native Greeks, the Corinthians. Satan could not bind God's Word in that wild city for some of them came to Christ.

Principle

God wants us to run with the gospel, not walk.

Application

It is one thing for the gospel to walk and it is another for it to run. We should each have a burden to spread the gospel widely.

"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

The Word of God is effective when we communicate it to those without Christ. The gospel is not effective if we do not share it. The Word and the gospel do not function like a religious rabbit's foot. They are not magic. If we preach the gospel and share the Bible, it will dash, not jog or trot, toward its end.

and be glorified,

Glorification of the Word of God builds on the previous phrase on the dissemination of the gospel ["run"].

Paul prays secondly that God would glorify His Word in Corinth, the vilest city in the first century. There was a saying throughout the world at that time for debauchery – "You are Corinthianized" [You are debauched]. Corinth was a city rotten to the core, the world's playground.

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When people embrace the gospel, they glorify God's Word. It is one thing for the gospel to spread quickly but it is something more for the Word of God to be glorified. The Word of the Lord is glorified when the character of its message is clearly welcomed by those without Christ.

"Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region" (Acts 13:48-49).

Principle

We can cultivate an appetite for the Word of God.

Application

When people accept the message of the gospel, it adorns their lives and thus adorns the God of the gospel. This exalts the word of the Lord. We cannot make too much of the Bible. There is no other book like it.

"For You have magnified Your word above all Your name" (Psalm 138:2).

We can cultivate an appetite for the Bible. The more we learn the principles of the Word and apply them to our lives, the Bible will become more vibrant, vital and interesting.

Before we come to Christ, the Bible is a closed book to us because we do not know the Author personally. Once we embrace Jesus as our Savior, we want to know Him better. We can have greater intimacy with Him if we keep His commandments.

"If you love Me, keep My commandments...
 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him...." Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. "He who does not love

Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me...."You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 14:15,21-24, 15:14-15).

Our attitude toward the Bible reflects our attitude towards the Lord Jesus because it is His message to us.

just as it is with you

Paul wanted the gospel to advance in Corinth, as it had in Thessalonica. Paul stayed in Corinth approximately two years preaching the gospel.

The Thessalonians glorified the Word when they embraced it for themselves (1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 2:13; 4:10; 5:11). With them, God's Word ran with freedom and they held it in high regard when it came to Thessalonica. It transformed their lives from pagan to Christian.

Principle

It is imperative to pray for the progress of the gospel.

Application

The focus of prayer should be on the content rather than the communicator. Federal Express cannot take credit for the wonderful gift someone sends us. It is the message that blesses people, not the messenger.

A supernatural person called Satan is out to hinder the message so there is need for God's supernatural intervention in spreading the gospel.

"Therefore we wanted to come to you—even I, Paul, time and again—but Satan hindered us" (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

Many people today have lost sight of the unadulterated force of the Word of God.

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"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

"For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.... I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:21-25, 2:3-5).

2 Thessalonians 3:2

"...and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith"

First, Paul requests prayer for the advancement of the gospel (verse 1). Next he requests prayer for deliverance from those who would like to undermine the gospel team.

The word "delivered" means to be rescued from, preserved from. Paul asks for prayer for the personal protection of his gospel team while they spread the gospel.

"Unreasonable" literally means out of place but denotes unbecoming, not befitting. The idea in this passage is outrageous belief. They were perverse, belligerent scoundrels. They diverted people away from truth into absurd false doctrine.

"Wicked" means active wickedness. These malignant people had a serious flaw. They were

degenerates theologically because they tended to corrupt others.

Paul's enemies act against the principles of reason and are responsible for absurdity and irreverence toward the gospel.

for not all have faith

The word "for" gives the reason these men were perverse: they did not have "the faith" [Greek]. Not everyone embraces the gospel. It divides people into two classes – those who personally trust Christ to forgive their sins and those who do not.

Principle

One of God's roles is to protect those who spread the gospel.

Application

Those interested in advancing the cause of Christ throughout the world must come to grips with the fact that they will face opposition. God is in the business of delivering us from the opponents of the gospel.

"Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints..." (Romans 15:30-31).

2 Thessalonians 3:3

"But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one"

Now Paul changes the subject from praying for the gospel team to praying for the Thessalonians.

But the Lord is faithful,

God is true to His promises. He cannot lie or pull any punches. What He promises, He delivers.

who will establish you

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Paul describes two characteristics of God's faithfulness. He will establish us and guard us from the evil one. The word "establish" means to fix, make fast, set, confirm, establish, strengthen. God will establish or confirm the Thessalonians in their belief (Luke 22:32; Acts 14:22; 16:5).

and guard you

God will also "guard" the Thessalonians. The idea is stand guard. God is our defender. He stands guard for us.

from the evil one

Paul has confidence that God will establish and guard the Thessalonians against any problem they might face.

Principle

The more truth we have in our souls, the more stable we become because God is faithful to us.

Application

God's faithfulness toward us inspires trust. Trust in God's faithfulness gives us stability because we know that He will be true to His Word (Numbers 23:19). We have His support in any situation we face.

"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

"He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

2 Thessalonians 3:4

"And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you"

A further basis for confidence is that God will enable them to do what Paul commanded them.

And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you,

The word "confidence" shows Paul had complete trust in and reliance upon God's ability to work in their lives. Paul in the previous verse lauded the faithfulness of God; now he demonstrates his trust in God's faithfulness in working in the lives of the Thessalonians.

Note that Paul does not say, "I have confidence in you Thessalonians." He has confidence in what God will do through the Thessalonians. Paul did not put his confidence in people. If we do, we will be terribly disillusioned.

"It is better to trust in the Lord Than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord Than to put confidence in princes" (Psalm 118:8-9).

both that you do and will do the things we command you

The basis for Paul's confidence in the Thessalonians is in the previous phrase, "in the Lord." He described the nature of the Lord in verse three as "faithful."

The Thessalonians "do," that is, were in the process of doing, the things that the gospel team taught them about the Christian life (1 Thessalonians 3:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 3:11).

"Will do" indicates the confidence of the gospel team that the Thessalonians will continue with their discipleship.

Principle

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We do what we do because of God's work in our lives.

Application

The church is God's church; we can rest in what God is doing with His church. What God begins, He finishes.

"...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ..." (Philippians 1:6).

Our faithlessness does not nullify God's faithfulness to us. God's faithfulness does not depend on our faithfulness to Him.

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

God cannot go back on His Word no matter how unfaithful we might be to Him. He cannot change His character. That is why we can place our trust in Him. We cannot place that kind of trust in our doctor or preacher. We need to trust them but not with the kind of trust we place in God.

Sometimes those we love the most let us down. Your loved one will let you down. Key people in your congregation will let you down. Your best friends will let you down. God will never let us down. You will never be disappointed in Him.

Have you been wounded by fellow Christians? You will never live long enough to straighten them out. We think everyone else needs straightening out, except us, of course. If we designate ourselves as experts, we set ourselves up for correction.

2 Thessalonians 3:5

"Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ"

Now may the Lord direct your hearts

God will "direct" the hearts of the Thessalonians. The word "direct" comes from two words: to make straight and down. The idea is to clear away any obstacle in their

hearts toward loving God or steadfastly enduring trial.

into the love of God

The "love of God" is our love to God. Paul prays that God would direct the hearts of the Thessalonians to love God.

and into the patience of Christ.

Paul prays that the hearts of the Thessalonians will follow the "patience of Christ." The word "patience" means endurance. They were to persevere in their persecutions as Christ did in His. They faced political and social pressure from their community. They needed to follow the example of Christ in suffering.

"...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Principle

When we pray for others, we can make a difference in their lives.

Application

Do we pray for the hearts of fellow Christians? We need to pray that 1) fellow believers will direct their hearts into love for God and 2) they will develop a steadfast character like that of Christ.

2 Thessalonians 3:6

"But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us"

Paul now turns to admonishing the disorderly (vv. 6-15).

But we command you, brethren,

The word "command" means to announce beside. This is a "command," not a suggestion.

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Paul is not addressing a debatable issue. It is a divine directive.

No one today has the authority of the apostle. The apostle had special rights of authority to found the church and write Scripture. Our only apostolic authority today is in the Word of God.

in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Paul's plea is to the person of Christ, to General Jesus, Commander-in-Chief of the head of the church. The command of the gospel team did not come from their authority but from the authority of Christ.

We do not find authority in pontifical decrees of church leadership or in fail-safe fiats but in the authority of the Bible. Our authority is vested in the Bible.

that you withdraw

Paul commands that the Thessalonians "withdraw" from certain Christians. We are to avoid certain types of Christians. "Withdraw" means literally to furl the sails. In essence, he's saying, "steer clear of certain types of people." This is a form of excommunication. In addition to "withdraw," the additional idea of "have no company with" occurs in verse 14.

from every brother

We are to withdraw ourselves from any brother who walks disorderly. We should not show partiality. There is a temptation in the church to make allowance for the wealthy and the popular. Such partiality weakens the church.

who walks disorderly

Paul isolates the particular predicament -- some people are renegades in the church.

The word "walk" means to walk around as a course of life. The issue here is not an occurrence of disobedience, but disobedience as a way of life.

A "disorderly" person is someone who consistently falls out of rank, somewhat like soldiers in a march (3:7,11). This person is out

of step with the church. They deviate from the prescribed order for the church. The church will fall into confusion if it does not live by biblical principles.

"For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints....Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:33,40).

"For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ" (Colossians 2:5).

Principle

We are to break fellowship with those who reject the principles of the Word as a course of life.

Application

We do not fellowship with those who reject the authority of the Word of God. The Bible is the base for fellowship. We get in step with other Christians when we accept the authority of the Bible in our lives.

and not according to the tradition

A "tradition" is something handed down. "Tradition" here means the oral and written teaching the gospel team passed down to the Thessalonians (1 Corinthians 11:2).

which he received from us

The word "received" carries the idea of receiving from another person. The Thessalonians received both written and oral information from Paul's team (i.e. 1 or 2 Thessalonians).

Principle

Christians are to reject people who show contempt toward Scripture.

Application

Some Christians will wound us more than help us. We may be fine on our own, but the moment we are with these people there is trouble.

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Church discipline must be handled biblically. This includes having adequate evidence of the fault, and giving the person warning ahead of time. As well, the person should be confronted privately, in accordance with Matthew 18:15. The next step involves public rebuke and banishment from the church.

The purpose of such church discipline is not punishment, but restoration to fellowship. It is an attempt to get the offender's attention so that he/she will repent and stop rebelling against the Word of God.

2 Thessalonians 3:7

"For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you..."

The gospel team set an example. They practiced what they preached. They were the models for Christianity.

Paul expected others to follow him. We get our word "mimic" from the Greek word for "follow." The idea is that of a model. Paul says, "Use me as your model of conduct."

The word "ought" is an imperative. Paul wanted the Thessalonians to follow his example since the gospel team was in their obedient attitude and actions towards the Word.

"Disorderly" suggests being out of rank, out of one's place, undisciplined, behaving disorderly. In the military sense, it means to break rank. Paul's team did not live off or mooch off the new Christians at Thessalonica (v.8). The team worked for their meals and keep.

Principle

It is not enough simply to believe something; we should strive to exemplify those beliefs.

Application

As Christians, we should be concerned about our testimony (1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 2:1f; 2:10). This is an imperative of the Christian life.

Small children mimic their parents. Older children mimic athletes. Children mimic both bad and good examples. When they get older, they watch people cheat on their taxes.

As Christians, we follow those whose lives are in accord with the Bible. It is not enough to simply believe something; we must behave something. Likewise, we must be an example to others. The things we do and say will come back to haunt or bless us. When our lives are in agreement with the Word, others can follow us.

2 Thessalonians 3:8

"...nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you..."

nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge,

The gospel team did not live off the new Christians at Thessalonica when they came to establish the church there. The Thessalonians were brand new Christians saved out of paganism with little understanding of Christian values so the gospel team waved their rights of financial support from the church there.

but worked with labor and toil night and day,

The team maintained themselves by hard manual labor night and day. They worked hard to bring the gospel to the Thessalonians.

that we might not be a burden to any of you

Paul did not want to be a heavy burden (Greek) to the Thessalonians. He did not want to load them down with an unnecessary financial burden (2 Corinthians 11:9). He was not a parasite on the Thessalonian church although he had the right to receive support from them. Paul waved that right in the light of the situation at that church. Even as Paul wrote this epistle, he worked at tent-making in Corinth (Acts 18:3).

The Philippian church sent money to Paul while he was in Thessalonica (Acts 16:15,34,40). Paul

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did receive financial help from others but not from the Thessalonians themselves.

Principle

Christians should wave their rights for the sake of others.

Application

Are you willing to wave your rights for others? Is the spiritual life of someone else more important to you than your spiritual rights? Mature Christians wave their rights for others. They set the pace for others.

2 Thessalonians 3:9

"...not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us"

not because we do not have authority,

The gospel team had the right to receive financial support from the new church at Thessalonica (1 Corinthians 9:4-6, 14; Galatians 6:6).

but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us

Paul worked as a tent maker and exemplified a positive work ethic for the Thessalonians.

The gospel team was an example of sacrificial giving. The word "example" means type. They had the right to receive financial support from the Thessalonian church (1 Corinthians 9:3-14; 1 Timothy 5:18) but they chose to give up that right for the sake of a new church. The team did this to set an example about work.

Principle

Christians are to be individual examples of Christianity.

Application

God expects Christians to view themselves as examples or types to the Christian life. We are to set the pace for others. We are to walk the talk. A reliable walk is of more worth than a barrel of words.

"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

2 Thessalonians 3:10

"For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat"

For even when we were with you,

Paul reminded the Thessalonians of a principle he taught them while he was in Thessalonica: "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." His gospel team did not receive any gifts without first working for their livelihood.

we commanded you this:

The Greek indicates that Paul's team continually commanded the Thessalonians that working for meals is a biblical principle.

If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat

The Greek emphasizes the phrase "will not." The issue is their obstinate attitude toward the subject of working for food. Laziness goes against many biblical principles. The question here is not refusing to give aid to those who cannot help themselves. He is not talking about people who cannot find a job or people who do not have the physical ability to work. The problem is exclusively living off the graciousness of other people.

The rationale some Thessalonians gave for not working was that Paul taught the imminent return of Christ and that He might come back momentarily. When they ran out of financial resources, they started sponging off their fellow Christians causing relational problems in the church.

Principle

To be tough about the principle of work is to be kind to individuals and to the church.

Application

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Many people today do not think in terms of principle. They hear an emotional story and respond, unknowingly fostering a parasite mentality in the church.

The problem here regards discernment. It appears that the only criterion for some in determining what we should do is "feeling." If it feels right, do it.

God provides resources through our work. A principle of God's creation is to work for our welfare. The only exception are people who cannot work for themselves.

2 Thessalonians 3:11

"For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies"

For we hear that there are some who walk among you

Paul receives a report of three problems in the church at Thessalonica: 1) they are out of step with a biblical principle, 2) they quit their jobs and sold their businesses and 3) they are busybodies.

in a disorderly manner,

We already considered the word "disorderly" (vv. 6,7). Someone who is "disorderly" is someone out of step with the church. They do not have a sense of order. They do not accept biblical principles because they have their own set of norms for the Christian life. They feel that it is proper to live like a parasite off fellow Christians and that sponging off other Christians was a good idea. They have the idea that "the world owes me a living." In the case of the Thessalonian church, some members felt that the other believers owed them a living.

not working at all,

Some people in Thessalonica quit their jobs and others sold their businesses because they mistakenly thought that the immanent return of Christ meant the immediate return of Christ.

"Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Ephesians 4:28).

but are busybodies

"Busybodies" carries the idea of not minding one's own business. Literally, it means to be working around with the idea of meddling in other people's business. There is a play on words in the Greek -- they are not busy in their own business but busy in the business of others. These people bustle about, trifling needlessly in matters not their own. They are busy all right but not busy in business! They are busy in everyone's business but their own.

People with too much time on their hands usually become gossips and intrude into the lives of others.

Principle

Laziness always creates a vacuum, creating the opportunity for idlers to meddle in other people's business.

Application

Nature abhors a vacuum. When people have too much time on their hands, they stick their noses in other people's business.

Being tough on the principle of work prevents the development of a parasite problem.. By insisting that people work for their own food, we correct the problem of busybodies who meddle in other people's affairs. These people always cause big problems in the church.

"And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not" (1 Timothy 5:13).

"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters" (1 Peter 4:15).

Some people assign to themselves the prerogative of religious cops. They love to tell other people how to run their lives. They know

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how to run every other family better than their own. They know how to run the church better than anyone else does. This is a great problem in many churches today. We need to deal with it like the apostle Paul did.

2 Thessalonians 3:12

"Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread"

Now those who are such we command and exhort

In the next two verses, Paul will reveal further insights about the "disorderly" by giving four commands to those who walk orderly (vv. 13-15). These commands show the obedient how to deal with the disobedient.

The word "command" appeared in verses four, six and ten. This is the fourth time Paul uses this word. Now he adds another word -- "exhort." Christians not only need commands, but they need exhortation. It is not enough to simply command. Christians need encouragement.

through our Lord Jesus Christ

The sphere of authority for the four following commands is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

that they work in quietness

"Quietness" means silence. The idea is that this person should not meddle in the affairs of others. We are not to meddle in other people's business, but to quietly mind our own business.

and eat their own bread

"Stay out of the business of others and work to provide for your own needs." "Mind your own business!"

Principle

Privacy is a Christian value.

Application

Work is a way of giving a testimony for the Lord. When we mind our own business and not

meddle in other people's business, we show a true Christian testimony.

2 Thessalonians 3:13

"But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good"

Should the slothful not follow Paul's instructions, those who follow the order of biblical Christianity by working for a living should do four things. First, they are not to grow weary in "doing good" and working for a living.

"Weary" means to be utterly spiritless, to be wearied out, exhausted. A weary person loses his or her motivation to accomplish God's will. He or she quits and gives up. God's will in this case is to never lose heart in working at our job.

Principle

We should never lose our motivation for daily work.

Application

Christians who do not provide for their family financially when they are able to do so are worse than infidels.

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8)

We should never allow ourselves to become discouraged in providing for our family through our employment. The Devil wants to discourage us in the daily mundane. He will do anything to discourage us along the way.

2 Thessalonians 3:14

"And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed"

And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle,

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The second thing that those who walk orderly should do is to "note that person." Do not avoid conflict. Single out people who leech off others.

note that person

Paul says, "Mark that person. Single them out." These people need to be singled out. Do not hope that the problem will just go away. Identify them and deal with them.

and do not keep company with him,

"Keep company with" literally means to mix up with (1 Corinthians 5:9). Don't do joint things together. Break close fellowship with this person. Do not show approval of their sin by your friendly fellowship with them.

that he may be ashamed

The third thing that the church should do about a person with a recalcitrant attitude toward work is to make these people feel ashamed about themselves. Literally, "may be ashamed," means to turn in, that is, to turn one upon himself and so produce a feeling of shame. This is an objective shame that changes conduct (1 Corinthians 4:14; Titus 2:8). Idlers thus feel shunned by godly people.

Principle

Breaking fellowship is sometimes necessary for the sake of the church.

Application

Separation from certain believers under certain conditions is a biblical principle. God separates the sheep and the goats. He even separates the ox and the ass (Deuteronomy 22:10).

In a day when unity becomes the all-encompassing principle that governs all Christian thought, this sounds very strange. Ecumenism always carries the danger of syncretism and distortion of the truth. It does not allow for God's distinctions. People want to reduce God's truth down to something more simple. God's Word is too big and too diverse for that.

The church should warn the disobedient members twice (1 Thessalonians 4:11; 5:14). If they still do not respond, then they should be singled him out as troublemakers and cut from fellowship (Matthew 18:15-17).

Shame is an effective means of correcting aberrant behavior in the local church.

2 Thessalonians 3:15

"Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother"

The fourth thing to consider in disciplining lazy people is to not make them feel like enemies. Discipline shouldn't be taken too far. This is a declaration of prudence (2 Corinthians 2:7). Paul uses this statement to qualify the previous injunction of "do not keep company with."

The church should not count recalcitrant believers as adversaries. The word "count" carries the idea of consider. The idea here is regard. We are not to regard carnal believers as non-believers or enemies.

"Admonish" means to put in mind, warn. The idea is to provide instruction so as to correct behavior or belief. It is our role as Christians to advise others of dangerous consequences of their behavior.

"Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Lest the Thessalonians go overboard with admonishing others, Paul urges them to admonish others as relatives and not as adversaries. Although a church member's behavior might be aberrant, he is still our brother in Christ.

Principle

It is important to use prudence and judgment in the discipline of fellow Christians.

Application

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Some people execute church discipline with a sense of hostility toward the offenders. This passage warns against that. We are not to develop an attitude of antagonism toward offending Christians but an attitude of kinship.

The purpose of church discipline is not to administer punishment but to restore the believer to fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:5). That is why we do not use excessive discipline. When we go beyond the appropriate bounds of correction, we do not show love but unnecessary harshness. We must keep the welfare of carnal Christians in mind at all times. However, we do show love through admonition.

2 Thessalonians 3:16

"Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all"

Paul concludes the epistle with a prayer, a greeting and a blessing (16-18). This verse gives his fourth and final prayer for the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; 2:16-17; 3:5).

Now may the Lord of peace Himself

God is the source of peace. The best peace is the peace that comes from the Lord. God is the God of peace (Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11). Paul uses this title for God because the church is vulnerable to conflict caused by people leeching off each other. The Thessalonian church needed the Author of peace to sustain them through this turbulent time. They will never have peace among themselves without Him.

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

give you peace

"Peace" here refers to unity in the church at Thessalonica. Peace comes from the God of

peace. At the heart of our relationship with each other is a God of peace. This epistle begins and ends with "peace."

always

Paul prays that they will have peace all of the time, not just most of the time. The fact that some believers cause problems should not change the local church's heart for peace.

in every way.

The word "way" indicates a turning, a manner. God wants to give us peace in such a fashion that it affects our customary way of life. Paul prays that they might have peace by all means. Whatever it takes to get peace in the church, we should do it.

The Lord be with you all

Paul does not infer that there are times the Lord is not with us. It is a prayer expressing his desire that the Thessalonians would embrace companionship with the Lord in the whole matter before them. It takes the Lord's presence to sustain peace within the local church (Matthew 28:20).

Principle

The Lord will enable your church to have peace within.

Application

If God does not answer prayer, all exhortation would be futile. If God does not restrain unruly people, then the church will head for turbulent times.

God promises His presence to help us have peace in the local church. Are you drawing on that peace? Is your local church appropriating that peace? God specializes in peace. That is why He calls Himself "the God of peace." The God of peace wants His church to be a church of peace.

2 Thessalonians 3:17

"The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write"

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Paul concludes his second epistle with a formal and personal greeting (2 Thessalonians 3:17,18).

The salutation of Paul

The word "salutation" means greeting. He embraces them as his own.

with my own hand,

Paul dictated 2 Thessalonians to a secretary (amanuensis), who wrote the epistle for him. However, he wrote the final greeting with his own hand. This was a precaution against attempts to forge his epistles (2 Thessalonians 2:2).

which is a sign in every epistle;

Paul's own hand writing in the final greeting indicates the letter's authenticity. The Thessalonians could distinguish his handwriting from his secretary's handwriting.

so I write

This "sign" was his autograph, a specimen of his handwriting.

Principle

We must test the authenticity of a document before we believe it's content. All doctrine stands or falls by testing it against Scripture.

Application

Today Christians are careless about where they get their ideas about God. The only authentic way to know God with specificity is in the Word of God. We can know God through creation and conscience, but the most accurate way to know Him is through His Word.

2 Thessalonians 3:18

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen"

Paul concludes 2 Thessalonians with a blessing.

As Paul began 2 Thessalonians with peace and grace, so he also ends the epistle. He closes each of his letters by praying that God's grace would be the portion of his readers.

Paul prays that "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" would be with the Thessalonians in sustaining power.

The blessing of 2 Thessalonians adds one word to the benediction of 1 Thessalonians – the word "all." The word "all" may be a plea for unity in the church. All of us need the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" for this.

The word "amen" means so be it. It is a word of faith. He prays that the Thessalonians would receive peace and grace to God.

Principle

God saves us and sustains us by grace.

Application

God's grace works on us to bring us to Christ (Ephesians 2:8,9) and the grace of God sustains us as Christians.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen" (2 Corinthians 13:14).