

II THESSALONIANS 3:6-18
GET TO WORK!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Thessalonians chapter 3 as we continue our study through Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica. And, this morning, we will be finishing up this letter.

I have titled this study, "***Get to Work!***" Now don't let that scare you because, for the most part, we have the opposite problem, we work too much! But this was an issue in Paul's day and it seems to be a growing issue today.

Keep in mind that in this chapter, II Thessalonians chapter 3, Paul is telling these Thessalonian believers how they should live out their Christian faith!

I hope you understand how important that is because how we live out our faith is a witness of our faith, our love for Jesus!

Paul put it like this in II Corinthians 3:2-3, "**You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.**"

So as people look at our lives, as they listen to the things we say, as they watch the things that we do, what are they reading? Many people will not pick up a Bible, but they will read your life like a book.

And maybe for the wrong reasons. Maybe they are watching your life to see you trip up so they can make fun of you. Maybe they just want to see if you live what you say you believe. Whatever the reason, people are watching you live out your faith and as they do, may the see Christ!

Now work, for many, is a four-letter word! Well, I guess that is true for all of us, I hope. But please understand that in Paul's day, the Jewish and Gentile cultures looked down upon manual labor. At least those who didn't have to work did look at it that way!

Let me show you what I mean in regards how many felt about work during this period of time. In the Jewish culture, one Rabbi expressed his view this way, and he put it in a prayer. He wrote,

I thank thee, O Lord, my God, that thou hast given me my lot with those who sit in the house of learning, and not with those who sit at the street corners; for I am early to work and they are early to work; I am early to work on the words of the Torah, and they are early to work on things of no moment. I weary myself, and they weary themselves; I weary myself and profit thereby, and they weary themselves to no profit. I run, and they run; I run towards the life of the age to come, and they run towards the pit of destruction.

- Cited in Leland Ryken, *Work and Leisure in Christian Perspective*, pp. 65-66

What a sad outlook this Rabbi had. I wonder where he got his food from? Probably from those working out in the fields! And yet, he looked down upon them. I guess that is what religion can do to a person.

In the Greek and Roman culture, they felt that manual labor was only fit for slaves or the lower class. Keep in mind that in the Roman world of this period of time they had an estimated sixty million slaves. That means about half of the population was enslaved to the other half.

Let me show you what I mean.

Many cultured Greeks and Romans also viewed manual labor as beneath their dignity, fit only for slaves or the lower classes. Aristotle declared working as a craftsman or a trader to be “devoid of nobility and hostile to perfection of character” (cited in Ryken, 64).

In a similar vein the Roman author Cicero wrote, “The toil of a hired worker, who is paid only for his toil and not for artistic skill, is unworthy of a free man and is sordid in character. . . . Trade on a small retail scale is also sordid” (cited in Ryken, 65).

And please understand that this kind of thinking found its way into the church. Eusebius, an early church father wrote,

Two ways of life were thus given by the law of Christ to His Church. The one is above nature, and beyond common human living; . . . wholly and permanently separate from the common customary life of mankind, it devotes itself to the service of God alone. . . . Such then is the perfect form of the Christian life. (The Proof of the Gospel, I, 8)

What a sad statement that is. The work I do here at the church is of no more importance than anything anyone else does in the secular world. We serve the Lord and thus, all that we do is unto Him and should bring glory to Him!

Let me share this with you because it will help set the stage for what we will be looking at this morning here in II Thessalonians chapter 3. We are told,

What if I were to predict that Jesus Christ will come back tomorrow? You might think I have lost my mind, and I certainly hope that you would know enough about what we have studied in 1 and 2 Thessalonians to tell me that I have completely forgotten what I have shared in this book. But take a moment and suspend your knowledge of what Paul has told us and consider the question: What would you do if you knew Jesus would return later this week? Would you go to work tomorrow? Would you start calling people? Would you change your life? Would you pray all day? Would you isolate yourself?

Christians have answered that question in different ways throughout history. Early in the church, some people sold all they had, moved to a mountain, and waited for the appearing of Jesus, only to discover that they had to go back down to the city and figure out what to do with their lives when he did not return. We cannot just think that is an extreme view found in the early church. Just [eighteen] years ago some Christians sold their homes, cashed in their retirement funds, and moved away from the cities to wait for Jesus to appear in the year 2000 amidst all the excitement and speculation that surrounded the Y2K ordeal. [I knew someone who did this, moved their entire family out to the country because of this. And nothing happened, we are still here!]

This response is not the way Paul would tell us to live if Jesus were coming back this week. Paul would tell you to go to work. He would tell you to go to school. He would tell you to continue your life, as a Christian, in your job and responsibilities. We face two difficulties with this type of response. First, we do not live our lives as we are supposed to live them. So, we put off apologizing to someone we have wronged, and we put off the areas that we know need to be addressed. If we knew Jesus was coming back this week, we might think of a few things we should do right away to be prepared. But outside of that, Paul's answer would be that we should continue with our lives and go to work.

Perhaps it is difficult to believe that we should continue on with life if Jesus were coming back this week. If so, then we are struggling with the area of calling and vocation. I think this is at the heart of what is taking place in our passage at the end of 2 Thessalonians. This church had a crisis over the work and vocation. We are not exactly sure why this crisis was happening. Some argue that it was a result of the eschatological excitement at this church. In other words, these Christians thought Jesus was coming back, so they sold all they had and were struggling with the consequences. Others have argued that there was social pressure from the rest of the culture in Thessalonica regarding a client-patron relationship. This is the type of relationship where a wealthy person (the patron) would provide for those who were not wealthy (the client) if the client provided certain tasks. Paul might have been addressing Christians who were caught in the client-patron relationship. Because they were both Christians, the wealthy Christian felt an obligation to help the poor Christian, even if the poor Christian was not living up to his or her end of the deal. . . .

The solution is the same no matter which problem we are facing. Paul is providing a theology of work and vocation in this passage, and he is helping us think about the relationship between work, the benefits that result from it, and its relationship to the peace of the community.

- James H. Grant Jr., 1 & 2 Thessalonians – The Hope of Salvation, pp. 195-196

In this section of II Thessalonians chapter 3 I see five points that Paul makes and then his conclusion as he finishes up this letter. So, with that as our background, let's begin reading here in II Thessalonians chapter 3 beginning in verse 6 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we finish up our study here in Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica.

II THESSALONIANS 3

VERSE 6

The first point that Paul makes here is this, ***PAUL EXPOSES THE PROBLEM!***

And as Paul exposes the problem, you can clearly see as you read this, that this is not a suggestion by Paul, but it is a command to remove yourself from that person! And Paul is not speaking to unsaved people here for he calls them "**brethren**" and "**brother.**" And the command is to "**withdraw**" from them, don't stay with them.

Why, what did they do that Paul is telling them that they need to withdraw from people like that. And he is not just telling them to do this, he is commanding them to do this!

The reason is simple, "**. . . you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.**"

In other words, if someone, a brother or sister in the Lord is getting you to do things that are contrary to what the Scriptures are saying, then you need to distance yourself from that person. I know, it says “**tradition**” but keep in mind that the New Testament was not put together yet and thus, this is the writings and the teachings of the apostles and these believers, some of them, were living contrary to what they were taught!

And this is an important lesson that we need to take heed and obey. If someone is trying to get you to follow something that goes against the Word of God or is twisting the Scriptures to make it say what they want, be careful!

Now I am not saying that this is just a one-time thing and you are done with that person. “The present tense of the verb *walks* denotes that it is a deliberate course of action. Their disorderly conduct is not an occasional lapse but a persistent practice.” (Hiebert)

Now we have a hard time with this. Someone is involved in something that is wrong and we go along with them, we ignore them, or we even encourage them to continue down that path. That is wrong! You talk with them, you encourage them to look at what the Scriptures are really saying and if they continue on, you distance yourself from them with the hope that as they are out there on their own, they would repent and return!

What is interesting here is that Paul is not focusing on some deep doctrine but just one issue that had come into the church and that is the issue of not working. We see that in verses 11 and 12, “**For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.**”

And Paul had already warned them in his first letter to the Thessalonians when he said, **“For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”** II Thessalonians 3:10.

And yet, they continued on with this problem and it seemed to be getting worse, more were involved, and Paul wants them to deal with it!

Church discipline is not easy, but it is not easy to discipline your children either, but both need to be done or you will create a monster!

So, the problem that Paul exposed here is that there were some in this body of believers who were out of line, out of step with the rest and they were not working. And if they continued down that path, then they needed to be let go, cut off from the fellowship.

Now please understand that Paul is not speaking about someone who can't work because of physical problems. Or they can't find a job even though they are trying! That is not the problem!

The problem is that they could work and, for whatever reason they just chose not to work! And we will deal with this a little bit more as we read on in a few minutes.

But make no mistake about it, as ***PAUL EXPOSES THE PROBLEM*** he shows them that the believer is not to walk with the **“disorderly”** brethren!

VERSES 7-9

Paul's second point is this, ***PAUL'S EXAMPLE!***

Remember that saying when you were growing up in which many parents said to their children? They would say, ***“Do as I say and not as I do!”*** Not a very good example to their children and I have not heard that spoken lately, which is good.

Paul was saying to these Thessalonian believers, “*Do as I do!*” In other words, he was an example to them, an excellent example of how they should live out their faith.

First of all, Paul was not disorderly, or he did not lead people away from God with the things he shared with them.

And Paul worked hard to support himself. He did not want to be a burden to these believers. Yes, Paul had the right to be supported, but again, he not only wanted to be an example to them, but, like I have said, he did not want to put that added pressure of supporting him when they were just trying to support themselves!

When I first came up here to Manitowoc to oversee this church, over twenty-three years ago, I worked outside the church to support my family. The church was small, it did not have the resources to support me and I had no problem with that.

You see, I came to serve the Lord and it was not about making money. I came up here and my job as a nurse, my pay was cut substantially from what I was being paid down in the suburbs of Chicago. I told the human resource person what I needed to make to pay the bills and they were able to meet me there, and I was blessed by that.

And hopefully, during the fifteen years or so I worked outside the church I was an example to you of what a servant of God is to be like. And I hope, by my actions that I remain an example of how we are to live out our faith! That was the heart of Paul and that should be our hearts as well.

You don't preach the Gospel for personal gain, you preach it because you love the Lord and you love the people of this world and you want them to come to saving faith.

Now you turn on some Christian stations and you see the exact opposite. You hear them speak of giving and giving and giving to support their ministry while they live in mansions and have jets and-so-on.

That is a poor example that they are showing, and they are getting others to follow their poor example. You know, “Blab it grab it!” mentality!

Let me share this with you. J. Vernon McGee wrote,

A young couple who had been in my classes when I taught at a Bible institute were inclined toward fanaticism. They thought they were super-duper saints, way out ahead of everyone else. But their exam papers were graded Cs or Ds, because they didn't really know the Word, although they affected to be very spiritual. (Incidentally, I don't think a person can be truly spiritual and be ignorant of the Word of God.)

They came to me after I had become a pastor in that city and said they wanted to go to the mission field. They attended the church I served although they were not members. I asked them if they had their financial support. They said no.

I asked, “Do you mean that you are going to the mission field without support?” “Oh,” they said, “we're going to trust the Lord.” Well, I said, “It's nice to trust the Lord, but can't you trust Him to raise your support here? Must you wait until you get into the mission field to trust Him for support? Why don't you get under a reputable mission board and work with them? If the Lord has called you to go to the mission field, He will raise up support for you - the Lord will lay your needs on the hearts of certain folk who will pray for you and support you financially.”

No, they didn't want to do it that way, they were just going to trust the Lord. Well, this young couple went out to the mission field, and there they became casualties.

They had to be brought home with money that some friends raised to pay their passage.

Since that time they have separated and are divorced. She is married again. I have heard that he has lost his faith altogether, although I doubt that he ever really had faith. Their behavior was foolish and fanatical.

Paul was making missionary work very practical. He supported himself by working with his hands, and he did it to be an example to the Thessalonian believers.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. V, p. 421

I have seen this in my own life many times. That God will provide as He calls us to do things. Yes, we must take a step of faith but not be foolish. J. Vernon McGee has one more story that shows how foolish some can be in regard to their faith. He wrote,

It is amazing how fanatical people can get about these things. The dean of men at Moody Bible Institute told about an incident that happened about fifty years ago.

Two young men roomed together who were other examples of those super-duper saints who thought they were completely sanctified. One day they didn't appear in the dining room for breakfast or for lunch or for dinner; so the dean went up to see what was the problem. They were just sitting there, looking out into space.

He asked them if they were sick. No, they weren't sick. "Then why haven't you come down for meals?" They said, "We're just trusting the Lord. We are waiting for Him to tell us whether we should go down to eat."

"Are you hungry?" They admitted that they were hungry. "Don't you think that is one of the ways the Lord has of letting you know that you ought to go down to eat?"

They said, “No, we are waiting for special revelation from Him, and we are not going to move until then.”

So the dean said to them, “I have news for you. You *are* going to move, but not down to the dining room. You are going to move out of school. You cannot stay here.” There is no place for that kind of fanaticism.

Today we are seeing a kind of fanaticism in the area of prophecy. It is quite interesting that in this epistle which deals largely in prophecy, almost half of it is given over to that which is practical. Paul puts the emphasis on the practical side of the great truth of the coming of Christ for His church. It is one thing to get fanatical about prophecy; it is quite another thing to believe the prophetic truth and then have it meshed and geared into our living down here so that it becomes practical and working.

We are to work while we wait. A gardener for a large estate in northern Italy was conducting a visitor through the castle and the beautiful, well-groomed grounds.

As the visitor had lunch with the gardener and his wife, he commended them for the beautiful way they were keeping the gardens.

He asked, “By the way, when was the last time the owner was here?”

“It was about ten years ago,” the gardener said.

The visitor asked, “Then why do you keep up the gardens in such an immaculate, lovely manner?”

The gardener answered, “Because I’m expecting him to return.”

He persisted, “Is he coming next week?”

The gardener replied, “I don’t know when he is coming, but I am expecting him today.”

Although he didn't come that day, he was living in the light of the owner's imminent return. The gardener wasn't hanging over the gate, watching down the road to see whether his master was coming. He was in the garden, trimming, cutting, mowing, planting. He was busy.

That is what Paul is talking about when he says we should be established in the work of the Lord in view of the fact that He is returning.

"If any would not work, neither should he eat." You see, the Thessalonians had a few fanatics who simply withdrew themselves and decided that they were going to spend all their time looking for the Lord's return. Paul writes, "Don't feed them. They have to go to work."

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. V, p. 421-422

We should be living out our Christians lives as if the Lord can return today. We should be doing things that would honor Him. You see, when Christians look at your life are they blessed by what they see? Are they encouraged to do as you are doing because it is what the Lord is leading you?

When unbelievers look at your life do they see someone who works hard, does his best, is not complaining about this and complaining about that?

You see, like it or not, you are an example to others! They are watching you and you might not think they are, but they are!

When my children were teenagers and turned from the Lord, it was hard. I did not think they were listening to me at all. I did not think they cared about anything that I said or did. It was a very difficult time but my faith in the Lord stood strong. I did not compromise my faith because of them.

What is interesting to me is that years down the road, when they returned to the Lord, they said to me, “Dad, through all we put you through, you did not change what you believed. Your faith was strong. You lived what you said you believed!”

Make no mistake about it, people are watching. And for these Thessalonian believers, Paul is reminding them to look at his example of how he worked hard, and even though he had the right to be supported by them, he did not burden them with that task. And now he wants them to follow his example and walk accordingly.

Thus, before Paul gets into the specifics of what they were doing wrong, he uses his life as an example of how they should be living, what they should be doing. Paul worked to support his ministry; he worked to be able to shine the Gospel message. When Paul was with them in Thessalonica they saw how he conducted himself, working to eat so that he would not be a burden to them.

Paul lays this example out in I Corinthians 9:3-14 where he says, **“My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.’ Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If**

others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

He could be supported, and at times he was, but that was not his focus and he would rather support himself and be a witness to others, not be a burden to them, then to receive support for the ministry!

Thus, if Paul worked to meet his own personal needs and to move the Gospel message forward, how could they justify their unruly behavior? Some did, and Paul is going to address this issue in a very strong way, he doesn't want them to continue in this attitude that dishonors God.

So, this second point of Paul's was important for these Thessalonian believers to see and follow and it is important for us - ***PAUL'S EXAMPLE!***

VERSE 10

The third point that Paul brings out is this, ***PAUL'S COMMAND!***

Someone said, "Work fascinates me. I can sit and watch people doing it for hours!"

And sadly, there are those who not only feel this way, but they live this way!

And please understand what Paul is saying here. He did not say, "***If anyone cannot work, neither shall they eat.***" Some get so upset with what Paul is saying here, but he did not say that.

There are those who, because of physical problems, they can't work. Also, those who are between jobs and are looking for work but just can't find a job. That is not what Paul is coming against, not at all!

Listen again to what Paul did say. **"If anyone will not work, neither shall they eat."**

You see, they can work but they chose not to, and they want to be supported by the church!

Several years ago we had a mom and her adult handicap son come to the church. They were both able to work but they didn't.

And I think they thought that since this is a church they can obtain money and things from the people here.

And they would greet you at the door with their hand out. And people were very gracious to them, but I was very uncomfortable about what was taking place.

So, I talked with the mom and explained to her that if they needed groceries and things, to speak to me and I would try to help them out. They were not to go up to people in the church with their hand out.

She was not happy with me but did agree to do that.

Then a relative came to church before service and told me that we needed to stop giving them groceries. They didn't need anything. They are living with him and they get government assistance and much of the food we were giving them was being thrown in the garbage because it was spoiling!

After they found out that I was wise to their actions, they were gone. They were just taking what they could get from the church because they were not willing to work and that is what Paul is coming against here!

Back in Genesis the Lord said that, “. . . ‘Cursed is the ground for your sake; *In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.*’” Genesis 3:17-19.

Work is work, it is hard. I realize that most of you think that is pretty simple, but I will tell you this. There are many today who want to get paid but don’t want to work!

And yet, for us as Christians, the Lord says it is going to be hard, you will sweat to put food on your table and you will work until you die! Work is a necessary evil you might say!

But for many, they have made work a bondage as the bumper sticker reminds us, “I owe, I owe, so it’s off to work I go!”

In other words, work is hard, but we have made it even harder by placing ourselves in bondage to our debt. We have to work and work, get two jobs just to pay our debt on our credit cards!

Let’s be smart. Yes, we are to work, and we are to do our best when we do work, but don’t put yourself into bondage by putting yourself so far in debt that you can’t get out!

For these Thessalonians, maybe they were waiting for the Lord’s return and for some of them, what was the use to work. They wanted to be taken care of until the Lord came!

And Paul reminds them that when he was with them he told them that if you are not willing to work to provide for your family and yourself, then I guess you won’t eat because the church is not going to feed into your bad behavior, encourage you to continue on!

So, ***PAUL’S COMMAND*** is pretty simple even though some may not like it, “**If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.**”

VERSES 11-13

Next, we see ***PAUL'S EXHORTATION!*** And in this exhortation, we see Paul tell us, ***“Don't do this!”*** and ***“Do that!”***

Here is the problem when someone has too much time on their hands. We see that not only were some of these believers not working, but it was that their idleness gave them time to be busybodies, sticking their noses into other people's business.

The idleness of some had become a source of sin. It was not only because of the work that they ***didn't do***, but also because of the harm they ***did do*** with their idle time.

What is the solution for these people? Get to work! You see, if you are busy working you won't have the time to stick your nose in other people's business. And when people are busybodies they tend to cause all kinds of trouble, all kinds of discord within the church, even divisions in the body of Christ.

Paul put it like this, **“... they work in quietness and eat their own bread.”** If you are busy you won't have time to cause trouble.

Let me deal with this idea of laziness, because, for the Christian, we should not be lazy!

The book of Proverbs has much to say regarding laziness. In Proverbs 20:4 we are told, **“The lazy man will not plow because of winter; He will beg during harvest and have nothing.”**

In Proverbs 19:15 we are told, **“Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, And an idle person will suffer hunger.”**

In Proverbs 6:6-11 we are told, **“Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler, Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep - So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, And your need like an armed man.”**

I like this one, a great excuse not to work in Proverbs 22:13, **“The lazy man says, ‘There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets!’”**

And lastly, in Proverbs 26:13-15 we are told, **“The lazy man says, ‘There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!’ As a door turns on its hinges, So does the lazy man on his bed. The lazy man buries his hand in the bowl; It wearies him to bring it back to his mouth.”** This is what not to do!

Again, what we are to do is work and do it quietly, mind your own business, don't cause trouble!

And there is a problem with those that have this empty time on their hands and are causing trouble. You see, not only were their actions or non-actions a bad witness, but also it was affecting those believers who were working.

They worked hard and then saw their brothers in the Lord who could work, but didn't, living off the church, living off of them.

It discouraged them, and some may have even thought of getting into that sluggard mentality, why not?

Some may have felt they should no longer support those in need if this was going to happen.

Folks, these people were not in need, they were in greed. We are to help those that are in need!

Thus, Paul reminds them not to grow weary, not to lose heart, continue working hard because God is fully aware of what you are doing.

Not only that, but by their efforts they were a witness to others.

It is sad to see this attitude with some Christians today and folks, it is nothing more than laziness on their part and they are a horrible witness to others and they can discourage their brothers in sisters in the Lord by their laziness, by feeding off of others when they can and should be working!

May we be encouraged by God's Word to us. Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 15:58, **"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."**

As you serve the Lord it is never in vain. Your work is not empty or worthless. God is not only working in you but through you and He will accomplish His will in the situation.

And it is not that we don't get tired, we do. These bodies of flesh can get very tired. But, as someone once said, ***"It's OK to be weary in the work; but it's not OK for a Christian to be weary of the work."***

So, we see that ***PAUL'S EXHORTATION*** is don't be lazy, disorderly, busybodies but do work hard and don't get weary in doing good because God is working, never forget that!

VERSES 14-15

The fifth point that we see here is that of *PAUL'S ADMONITION* or he is warning them what they should do if someone is living that kind of lifestyle as a Christian. And this is not easy and yet, if you really care for the person, you will do this so that they may repent and get right with God! It is as Calvin said, "The intention of excommunication is not to drive men from the Lord's flock, but rather to bring them back again when they have wandered and gone astray. . . . Excommunication is to be distinguished from anathema."

Many today feel that there should be no consequences to their actions. But there definitely are consequences to our actions!

Here we see Paul tell us that because they refused to listen it just showed they were willfully being disobedient and thus, there were consequences for their actions.

They were to be disfellowshipped, kicked out of the church. That may seem harsh but if you let them continue on in their sin you are helping them to live in sin, not to grow.

Tragically, today when you confront someone in sin and they don't like it, which is most of the time, they just move down the road to another church. There is no accountability!

Back then, when you were out you were out, there was no place to run to! And again, the idea is that they would see their sin, that they would repent and then they would be allowed back into the fellowship.

Paul, in I Corinthians 5:1-6 shows us a problem that arose in the church in Corinth and what they did about it and what Paul told them they really needed to do.

We are told, **“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles - that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?”**

Here we see that a Christian man was having sex with his unsaved stepmother or his mother and the church was ignoring it. Thus, Paul rebukes them and tells them that this man must be removed from the church, removed from the protection of the church so Satan can buffet his flesh!

Again, the idea here is not for destruction, but for brokenness that leads to repentance and restoration.

And that is what we see as we move into II Corinthians 2:5-8 as this man repented and what Paul says the church needs to do now.

We are told, **“But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent - not to be too severe. This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.”**

Once the person repents, they are to be accepted back in, received in love with the forgiveness of God.

Thus, church discipline is needed in the church today, not for destruction but for restoration!

Of this Warren Wiersbe said, “Church discipline is not a group of ‘pious policemen’ out to catch a criminal. Rather, it is a group of broken hearted brothers and sisters seeking to restore an erring member of the family.”

How true that is, or that is how it should be! But what we do see is people condone the sin that the person is involved in instead of confronting the person who is in sin!

Paul also wants them to remember that if you have to remove someone from the church because of their sin and their refusal to repent and get right with God, it doesn’t make them our enemy, they are our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

You see, our removal from fellowship with them is done out of love for them, to see them get right.

Paul picks up on this in regard to the difference between someone who is in sin that is unsaved and someone who is in sin that is saved.

He tells us in I Corinthians 5:9-11, **“I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner - not even to eat with such a person.”**

What we see many times in the church is the exact opposite of what Paul is saying here. The church moves away from the unsaved because they are sinners and they ignore the sins of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

I am sorry to say, that just shows that you don't love them. Correction is needed, and it is done in love. But to ignore a fellow believer's sinful actions is just wrong and you are allowing them to continue on in their sin.

On the other hand, for the unsaved, by avoiding them you are not witnessing to them the love and forgiveness of God. You are not helping them come to the Savior, to Jesus!

And keep in mind that in the culture of that day (and in many cultures today), eating with someone is an expression of friendship and partnership. In some cultures, if a man eats at your table, you are bound to regard him as a friend and a partner. Paul warns the Corinthian Christians they cannot continue in Christian fellowship with an infamous sinner who calls himself a Christian.

And Paul's point is also with doctrine. If someone has brought false teaching into the church, it needs to be dealt with and not ignored. If it is not dealt with it will be like a cancer and destroy the church!

So, ***PAUL'S ADMONITION*** or warning to them is to let those who are in rebellion, those who are living in sin and refuse to repent and get right with God, go. Remove them from your fellowship so that they may see the consequences of their actions and get right with God!

VERSES 16-18

And now we come to *PAUL'S CONCLUSION* of this letter.

Think of this peace like this. "Peace is not cessation from persecution, but is the calm of heart that comes from faith in God and that is independent of circumstances."

Here was a young church, young believers in the Lord and they were experiencing persecution and tribulation in the world for their faith.

And Paul is praying for them that the Lord of peace will fill their lives with His peace. Folks, true peace is only found in the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. The world does not have this kind of peace for us.

Spurgeon put it like this, "I want to call particular attention to the apostle's words in this place. He does not say 'May the Lord of peace send his angel to give you peace.' It were a great mercy if he did, and we might be as glad as Jacob was at Mahanaim, when the angels of God met him. He does not even say, 'May the Lord of peace send his minister to give you peace.' If he did we might be as happy as Abraham when Melchizedec refreshed him with bread and wine. He does not even say, 'May the Lord of peace at the communion table, or in reading the word, or in prayer, or in some other sacred exercise give you peace.' In all these we might well be as refreshed . . . but he says 'the Lord of peace himself give you peace,' as if he alone in his own person could give peace, and as if his presence were the sole means of such a divine peace as he desires."

Remember what Jesus said in John 16:33, "**These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.**"

Also, in Isaiah 26:3 we are told, **“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.”**

Where or from whom are you seeking peace from? May it be the Lord!

And as Paul is closing here, as was his custom, he wrote the final words of the epistle with his own hand. The rest of the letter was dictated by Paul and written down by another person for Paul. This was both a personal demonstration of affection, and proof that the letter was authentic.

And he concludes with these words, **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”** II Thessalonians 3:18.

Interestingly enough, when Paul concluded I Thessalonians in a similar fashion, but see what is missing. He wrote, **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.”** I Thessalonians 5:28.

The word **“all”** is missing here in I Thessalonians 5:28 as compared to what we have read here in II Thessalonians 3:18.

Why? Morgan gives us this insight, “There is the addition of one little word in this final benediction as compared with its form in the first Epistle. It is the word ‘*all*.’ Thus the apostle takes those whom he had been rebuking and correcting, and so reveals the greatness of his heart and his love.”

Yes, there is some correction here in II Thessalonians but with that correction we see the love of Paul for these believers and his desire that they would grow in the Lord!

And I love how grace closes this letter out. We saw that it opened up this letter as well. In II Thessalonians 1:2 Paul said, **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!”**

So, this letter opens and closes with grace and so does our lives!

You see, Grace saves us; Grace sustains us; and by the Grace of God we will be received into glory!

So, it is fitting for Paul to start and end his letter with the Grace of God! And thus, we will end our study this morning with these words of Paul to the Thessalonians. Words of encouragement as we go forth in our Christian walk. **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”** II Thessalonians 3:18.