

Session 16

An Exposition of I & II Thessalonians

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II Thessalonians 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

Though the Thessalonians were *brethren*, Paul and the other apostles with him maintained the spiritual right to *command* them regarding certain behaviors in the church.

Gift ministries, like apostles and prophets, are placed by Christ. Because of this, they have been given divine authority by the Son of God to carry out God's will when led by the Spirit of God.

It is thus both the right and responsibility for true ministers to come in God's name, hold forth His Word, and reveal His will to man. This is a heavenly charge and should not be taken lightly.

II Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, II Tim. 4:2

Preach the word - The Word of God; the gospel. This was to be the main business of the life of Timothy, and Paul solemnly charges him in view of the certain coming of the Redeemer to judgment, to be faithful in the performance of it.

Be instant - see the notes at Romans 12:12. The meaning here is, that he should be constant in this duty. Literally, "to stand by, or to stand fast by;" that is, he was to be pressing or urgent in the performance of this work. He was always to be at his post, and was to embrace every opportunity of making known the gospel. What Paul seems to have contemplated was not merely, that he should perform the duty at stated and regular times; but that he should press the matter as one who had the subject much at heart, and never lose an opportunity of making the gospel known.

In season - εὐκαιρῶς *eukairōs*. In good time; opportunely; compare Matthew 26:16; Luke 22:6; Mark 14:11. The sense is, when it could be conveniently done; when all things

were favorable, and when there were no obstructions or hindrances. It may include the “stated and regular” seasons for public worship, but is not confined to them.

Out of season - ἀκαίρως *akairōs*. This word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It is the opposite of the former, and means that a minister is to seek opportunities to preach the gospel even at such periods as might be inconvenient to himself, or when there might be hindrances and embarrassments, or when there was no stated appointment for preaching. He is not to confine himself to the appointed times of worship, or to preach only when it will be perfectly convenient for himself, but he is to have such an interest and earnestness in the work, that it will lead him to do it in the face of embarrassments and discouragements, and whenever he can find an opportunity. A man who is greatly intent on an object will seek every opportunity to promote it. He will not confine himself to stated times and places, but will present it everywhere, and at all times. A man, therefore, who merely confines himself to the stated seasons of preaching the gospel, or who merely preaches when it is convenient to himself, should not consider that he has come up to the requirement of the rule laid down by the apostle. He should preach in his private conversation, and in the intervals of his public labors, at the side of the sick bed, and wherever there is a prospect of doing good to any one. If his heart is full of love to the Saviour and to souls, he cannot help doing this.

Because gift ministries have been called by Christ for ministry, they are given the spiritual inspiration to speak for God when prompted by the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word for *command* is #3853 *paraggellō*. *HELPS Word-studies* defines it as “properly, to charge, give a command that is fully authorized because it has gone through all the proper (necessary) channels. / God commands (3853 /*paraggellō*) believers to act as He authorizes them through the revelation of faith (His inworked persuasions). Accordingly, 3853 (*paraggellō*) . . . ‘originally meant to pass on or transmit; hence, used as a military term, of passing a watchword or command; and so generally to command.’”

No true servant of Jesus Christ would give a command in Christ’s name without first being commanded by Him to do so. To think otherwise is to know nothing of the strict subjection that the Lord Jesus demands from the spiritual ministries He has placed in His church.

For true servants, Christ’s will is always superior to their own, and the influence of the Spirit of the Lord is greater than human flesh.

Ultimately, God gives no man spiritual authority over another unless he is first willing to subject himself to Christ’s Lordship.

This ecclesiastical order encourages unity and harmony in the body of Christ and provides the means for spiritual growth.

Withdraw.

The Greek root word for *withdraw* is #4724 *stello*. *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* defines it as “to remove oneself withdraw oneself to depart, followed by ἀπό with the genitive of the person, to abstain from familiar contact with one.”

The Thessalonians were commanded to avoid fellowship with those who were unruly and did not obey the spiritual doctrines given to them, those who had refused Paul’s apostolic authority and lived as they chose, and not as God willed.

The Greek word for *disorderly* is #814 *ataktós*, defined as “properly, disorderly (‘breaking rank’); insubordinate to God’s Word and hence fruitless (unproductive) – because lacking proper order (discipline).”

When men, even those who claim to be brethren, are insubordinate to apostolic instruction and refuse to yield to its authority in their own lives, the believers of God who have chosen subjection to Him should avoid having religious fellowship with them.

With this strong collective response, it is hoped that those who have sinned become ashamed and repent for their sin.

To *walk disorderly* does not mean to take a false step here and there. Instead, it is a consistent habit of breaking rank by not submitting to gospel instruction. Rebels, or in this case, even slackers, should not be fellowshiped with because the Lord does not want their sinful behavior to act as leaven in a humble and holy group of saints.

Galatians 5:9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Gal. 5:9

Leaven is that small portion of fermented dough which is introduced into the fresh lump of dough, and communicates lightness to the whole mass. It is employed figuratively in Scripture to denote the working of both good and bad influences, and is used both of persons and of principle...—comp. Matthew 16:12; Luke 13:21. . . . But error, once admitted, is a virus which will gradually spread and poison the whole system of doctrine, or the whole spiritual life of the individual or of the Church.

Bengel’s Gnomon, Gal. 5:9

[*One wicked man destroys much good, Ecclesiastes 9:18. The malice, cunning, or violence of a single person, often produces immense injury. —V. g.*]

II Thessalonians 3:7–9 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

⁸Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

⁹Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

Though Paul had the power and authority to demand that the Thessalonians provide for his physical needs, he did not exercise this right. Instead, he set an example for how all Christians should labor in the church. Using the example of a laborer, Paul hoped to impart the idea that all true followers of Jesus Christ should work to give and not themselves be carried by others.

Acts 20:35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

It is important, if not critical, that those who call themselves Christians realize the importance of work. No Christian assembly should allow laziness or idleness. This extends even to evangelism. However, many have taken the title of “Christian” yet choose to carry no weight whatsoever in advancing the gospel.

The truth is that no man should think that he has met the spiritual criteria of being a servant of Christ until he has labored not only to care for his own needs but also to help others as well.

Idleness, though not recognized by many as spiritually harmful, is one of the great dangers to any society. The law of Christ demands not only bearing one's own burdens but also assisting with the burdens of others.

Jesus told His disciples because they had been given freely to, they should do the same for others.

Matthew 10:8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Matt. 10:8

Freely ye have received, freely give - That is, they were not to sell their favors of healing, preaching, etc. They were not to make a money-making business of it, to bargain specifically to heal for so much, and to cast out devils for so much. This, however, neither then nor afterward precluded them from receiving a competent support. See Luke 10:7; 1 Corinthians 9:8-14; 1 Timothy 5:18.

II Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, II Thess. 3:10

The Thessalonians are not to be misled into a false charity: giving food in Christ's name to persons who are capable of working and able to get work, and are too indolent to do so. The support which is here forbidden to be given to these disorderly persons might come either direct from the private liberality of individuals, or from some collected church fund administered by the deacons.

There is no ambiguity in the apostle's words here: the very clear and forceful command is, *if any would not work* or choosing not to, though physically able, *neither should he eat*.

If this biblical standard were applied today, much that has been done to promote supposed Christian charity would need to be abandoned. Because unfortunately, for many, Christianity is nothing more than a welfare state.

Yet, make no mistake about it; if men are unwilling to work to feed themselves or care for their own needs, there is little chance that they will exert the necessary faith, energy, and obedience to do God's will, which is essential for obtaining His salvation.

Ultimately, all men have a degree of responsibility for their own salvation. And as Philippians exhorts believers, all should be willing to labor, especially in regards to their own salvation.

Philippians 2:12-13 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

¹³ *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Though men are saved by grace and not by works, this does not imply that they carry no personal responsibility for salvation. Ultimately, God works in the called to do according to His own good pleasure, inspiring them to pursue the narrow gate that leads to salvation.

Matthew 7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

¹⁴ *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

Ultimately, it is the Lord Who works in His people to pursue spiritual things that will result in them finding both life and peace.

Romans 8:6 *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

Barnes's Notes on the Bible, Rom. 8:6

To be spiritually minded is to seek those feelings and views which the Holy Spirit produces, and to follow his leadings.

II Thessalonians 3:11 *For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.*

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, II Thess. 3:11

But are busy-bodies - Compare the 1 Timothy 5:13 note; 1 Peter 4:15 note. That is, they meddled with the affairs of others - a thing which they who have nothing of their own to busy themselves about will be very likely to do. The apostle had seen that there was a tendency to this when he was in Thessalonica, and hence he had commanded them to "do their own business;" 1 Thessalonians 4:11. . . . In times of affliction and want, we should be ready to lend our aid. At other times, we should feel that he can manage his own affairs as well as we can do it for him; or if he cannot, it is his business, not ours.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, II Thess. 3:11

busy bodies—In the Greek the similarity of sound marks the antithesis, "Doing none of their own business, yet overdoing in the business of others." Busy about everyone's business but their own. "Nature abhors a vacuum"; so if not doing one's own business, one is apt to meddle with his neighbor's business. Idleness is the parent of busybodies (1Ti 5:13). Contrast 1Th 4:11.

The Word of God is very clear on how people are to conduct themselves in the Lord's church: by working with their own hands and quietly going about their own affairs and responsibilities.

I Thessalonians 4:11 *And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;*

II Thessalonians 3:12 *Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.*

The command given to the Thessalonian assembly, *if any would not work, neither should he eat*, is now directed toward the individual offenders.

There is no doubt that silence and industry are more profitable in ministry than meddling and being a busybody. It should be enough, therefore, for all Christians to be about their own business and prove their own work, as doing so leads to godly contentment and genuine spiritual happiness.

Galatians 6:4 *But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.*

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Gal. 6:4

In himself alone - Compare Proverbs 14:14; "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." The sentiment is, that he will find in himself a source of pure joy. He will not be dependent on the applause of others for happiness. In an approving conscience; in the evidence of the favor of God; in an honest effort to lead a pure and holy life, he will have happiness. The source of his joys will be within; and he will not be dependent, as the man of ambition,

and the man who thinks of himself more highly than he ought, will, on the favors of a capricious multitude, and on the breath of popular applause.

And not in another - He will not be dependent on others for happiness. Here is the true secret of happiness.

II Thessalonians 3:13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

There is hardly a more accurate representation of manifesting Jesus's true heart that when His people do good in His name. This behavior encapsulated the Savior's earthly walk, and it should be reflected in those saved by Him.

Acts 10:38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Acts 10:38

Who went about doing good - Whose main business it was to travel from place to place to do good. He did not go for applause, or wealth, or comfort, or ease, but to diffuse happiness as far as possible. This is the simple but sublime record of his life. It gives us a distinct portrait of his character, as he is distinguished from conquerors and kings, from false prophets and from the mass of people.

To do *good* should be the Christian's main purpose in life, a heavenly charge that is abundant in scripture.

Yet, when men know to do good, but do it not, then as far as God is concerned, evil has been committed. The absence of doing good therefore, when it is known it should be done, is viewed as nothing less than sin in God's eyes.

James 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

It is not enough for men to abstain from pursuing evil; if they do not pursue good. Simply put, if a man does not seek to do good, it is impossible for him to walk in any real, true unity and fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Jas. 4:17

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin - That is, he is guilty of sin if he does not do it. Cotton Mather adopted it as a principle of action, "that the ability to do good in any case imposes an obligation to do it." The proposition in the verse before us is of a general character, but probably the apostle meant that it should refer to the point specified in the previous verses - the forming of plans respecting the future. The particular meaning then would be, "that he who knows what sort of views he should take in regard to the future, and how he should form his plans in view of the uncertainty of life, and still does not do it, but goes on recklessly, forming his plans beastingly and confident of success, is guilty of sin against God."

Still, the proposition will admit of a more general application. It is universally true that if a man knows what is right, and does not do it, he is guilty of sin.

If he understands what his duty is; if he has the means of doing good to others; if by his name, his influence, his wealth, he can promote a good cause; if he can, consistently with other duties, relieve the distressed, the poor, the prisoner, the oppressed; if he can send the gospel to other lands, or can wipe away the tear of the mourner; if he has talents by which he can lift a voice that shall be heard in favor of temperance, chastity, liberty, and religion, he is under obligations to do it: and if, by indolence, or avarice, or selfishness,

or the dread of the loss of popularity, he does not do it, he is guilty of sin before God. No man can be released from the obligation to do good in this world to the extent of his ability; no one should desire to be. The highest privilege conferred on a mortal, besides that of securing the salvation of his own soul, is that of doing good to others - of alleviating sorrow, instructing ignorance, raising up the bowed down, comforting those that mourn, delivering the wronged and the oppressed, supplying the wants of the needy guiding inquirers into the way of truth, and sending liberty, knowledge, and salvation around the world. If a man does not do this when he has the means, he sins against his own soul, against humanity, and against his Maker; if he does it cheerfully and to the extent of his means, it likens him more than anything else to God.

II Thessalonians 3:14 *And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.*

It is not wrong to *note* and mark as offenders those who break spiritual rank and think themselves above spiritual authority.

Likewise, it is not transgressive nor unrighteous to refuse companionship with the proud or unruly. If men then have chosen to be disobedient to God's will for their life, then they should not be fellowshiped with. This is the gospel's command, and any who profess to follow it, should obey its message.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, II Thess. 3:14

Note that man.—The reflexive voice of the verb implies mutual warning against him: "Agree to set a mark upon him, to make a marked man of him." The notion is that of making him easily recognisable, so that no Christian should "have company" with him unawares. (Comp. Genesis 4:15.)

II Thessalonians 3:15 *Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

Christians are instructed to separate themselves from those who *walk disorderly*. However, if such people are brethren and are themselves truly saved, then they should not be thought of as enemies.

This teaches us that there is a great difference between those who are weak in the faith and those who publicly break rank and, even when corrected, reject apostolic authority.

Ultimately, men are known by their fruits and should be dealt with accordingly. Men's actions reveal who they truly are, whether they are merely young in the gospel or have indeed set themselves against it.

II Thessalonians 3:16 *Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.*

Here we have the apostle's wish and prayers for the Thessalonians, that the *Lord of peace*, Jesus Christ, would impart to them spiritual peace.

Every true Christian knows the inward stabilizing force of the Christ Spirit within, which produces the spiritual fruits of joy and peace. This spiritual peace, which has God as its source, surpasses human understanding. Ultimately, Paul prayed for the Lord Jesus to impart that supernatural encouragement which is His alone.

Philippians 4:7 *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Phil. 4:7

And the peace of God - The peace which God gives. The peace here particularly referred to is that which is felt when we have no anxious care about the supply of our needs, and when we go confidently and commit everything into the hands of God. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee;" Isaiah 26:3; see the notes at John 14:27.

Which passeth all understanding - That is, which surpasses all that people had conceived or imagined. The expression is one that denotes that the peace imparted is of the highest possible kind. The apostle Paul frequently used terms which had somewhat of a hyperbolic case (see the notes on Ephesians 3:19; compare John 21:25), and the language here is that which one would use who designed to speak of that which was of the highest order. The Christian, committing his way to God, and feeling that he will order all things aright, has a peace which is nowhere else known. Nothing else will furnish it but religion. No confidence that a man can have in his own powers; no reliance which he can repose on his own plans or on the promises or fidelity of his fellow-men, and no calculations which he can make on the course of events, can impart such peace to the soul as simple confidence in God.

God fills His people's hearts with peace, enabling them to continue doing His will in their lives. Consequently, at the core of every faithful Christian walk, God's peace will be found.

At the same time, no man can remain faithful to God if divine peace is withdrawn. Because of this, when one is no longer strengthened supernaturally by God, all desire and energy to do His will is lost. Thus, without the Lord's own presence in the saved, they could never remain faithful to Him.

The Lord be with you all.

It is spiritually necessary for those called to heaven through God's Son to depend on Christ's presence in their lives. By committing our burdens to the Lord—those things we could never accomplish on our own—our plans and hopes for the future have the hope of being fulfilled.

Proverbs 16:3 Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Prov. 16:3

Commit thy works unto the Lord.—Literally, roll them upon Him, as a burden too heavy to be borne by thyself. "Thy works" signify all that thou hast to do. (Comp. Psalm 37:5.) God provides such works for us. (Comp. Ephesians 2:10.)

And thy thoughts shall be established.—Thy plans shall prosper, for they will be undertaken according to the will of God, and carried out by His aid.

II Thessalonians 3:17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

Paul's epistles were personal letters to communities of believers. These epistles, thirteen or perhaps fourteen (including *Hebrews*) in number, were later made part of Christ's doctrine for the Christian church. Because they came from Paul's own hand, they had the proper spiritual authority to be received as revelation from Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, it was Jesus Christ who taught Paul, and Paul who communicated this revelation to the Thessalonians.

What is true concerning Galatians is also true of Paul's other letters to early Christians.

Galatians 1:11–12 *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.*

¹² *For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Though an unspiritual man cannot understand this process of receiving heavenly revelation, those who have received Christ's Spirit can attest and bear witness to the fact that spiritual things can only be received spiritually. This reaffirms that the gospel of Jesus Christ did not originate in man but from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Benson Commentary, Gal. 1:11–12

But I certify you, brethren — He does not, till now, give them even this appellation; *that the gospel which was preached by me* — Among you; *is not after man* — Of mere human authority and invention; is not from man, not by man, nor suited to the taste of man; *for I neither received it of man* — From the authority or interposition of any man; *neither was I taught it* — By any writing or any human method of instruction; *but by revelation of Jesus Christ* — Who communicated to me by inspiration his gospel in all its parts, and sent me forth to publish it to the world. If Paul did not receive the gospel from man, as he here asserts, and as we are therefore sure he did not, the perfect conformity of his doctrine with the doctrine of the other apostles, is a proof that he was taught it by revelation from Jesus Christ, who revealed to him at first his resurrection, ascension, and the calling of the Gentiles, and his own apostleship; and told him then there were other things for which he would appear to him.

II Thessalonians 3:18 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

The *grace* spoken of is that grace and favor that comes from God and has its source in His Son.

John 1:17 *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

True Christianity is a religion of divine favor, spiritual gifts, and heavenly blessings. These realities become available through exposure to and belief in the Son of God. It is He Who reveals the true nature of heaven, and He Who, through the sacrifice of His own life, provides a path for sinners to be accepted by God.

I Peter 3:18 *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*

It is reasonable, then, that since Jesus died for us and continues to strengthen us while on this earth, we should live for Him. Since Christ has brought us to God, then it is only fitting that we should live the remainder of our earthly lives for Him.

II Corinthians 5:15 *And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

This has been our heart in writing and publishing *The Word of the Lord: An Expository Study of I&II Thessalonians*.