

“Conclusion Of Paul’s Letters To The Church In Thessalonica” 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18

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Teaching Aim: To understand that the two major themes in **1st and 2nd Thessalonians** are “*the Second Coming of Christ*” and “*the Day of the Lord*” in judgment. To recognize there is a third issue in both letters: “*the refusal of some Christians to work*” as they gave up their jobs in anticipation of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. To realize the disobedience of these lazy Christians caused many problems within the church as they depended on the church body to meet their needs. To see how Paul handled this crisis and recognize how his response still applies to us today.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)

Part I: Paul encourages believers to provide for their own families (2 Thess. 3:6-10)

1. Paul begins **verse 6** by using a very strong word: “*command*.” The word is used elsewhere of a military command. What did Paul under the authority of Jesus Christ command the Christians in Thessalonica to do? When Paul spoke of “*the tradition received from us*,” he was speaking either of the teachings he and Silas shared during their Second Missionary Journey or his writings in **1 Thessalonians**. Whenever Paul taught, he taught with Apostolic authority. Today, why is it so important for us to check the teachings we hear and the traditions we experience against the authority of Sacred Scripture?

2. When Paul ministered, it was important to him that he set the example in Christian living. What can we learn from **verses 7-8** about the way Paul and Silas lived while in Thessalonica? Did this mean that Paul would be unwilling to accept help from other Christians or would even deny an invite to dinner at the home of a family of believers? (See **2 Cor. 11:7-11**) What was Paul really saying in **verses 7-8**?

3. What was Paul’s main way of earning a living? (See **Acts 18:1-3**) What do we mean today when we say that a pastor is “*a tentmaker*?” Note: It is important to note that Paul not only labored for his own needs, but also for the needs of his fellow Christians. He worked hard enough to have money left over to share with others. Have you ever known a “*Christian*” who chose not to work but rather to live off of financial assistance from other believers? What kind of a Christian testimony does this lifestyle leave with others?

4. The Greeks despised manual labor and usually had their slaves do it. Do you think this kind of mindset affected the Greek believers living in Thessalonica? Perhaps these misguided “believers” thought they were more spiritual because they were not working. Do people still have this kind of mindset today? How would Paul respond to these individuals?

5. Why did Paul choose to work instead of receiving financial support from the Thessalonians (vs. 9)? Warren Wiersbe writes, *“This is the difference between authority and stature. A leader earns stature as he obeys the Word and serves His people in the will of God. Authority comes from position; stature comes from practice and example. Stature earns the leader the right to exercise authority.”* Which spiritual leaders in your life experience have led by stature? Why is stature a more effective leadership style than authority?

6. Is there ever a time for Christian leaders to receive financial remuneration? If so, when? (See **Luke 10:7**; **1 Corinthians 9:9-12**) Paul had every right to receive financial remuneration but chose to refuse it. Why? Does this make other Christian workers wrong for receiving financial help in their duties?

7. Every Christian should be working in some capacity (vs. 10). How firm was Paul on this point? Is this command for all people not working (including those who are disabled) or only those able-bodied individuals who refuse to work? How does this principle relate to people on welfare today or people standing on the corners begging for money?

Part II: Believers in Jesus Christ should never grow weary in doing good (2 Thess. 3:11-15)

1. What is one of the reasons that Paul wrote the epistle of **2 Thessalonians (vs. 11)**? What is a busybody? What makes busybodies within the church setting especially dangerous to the health of any local church? What issues had Paul already dealt with in **1 Thessalonians**? (See **1 Thess. 4:10b-11**; **5:14**) Paul’s cure for gossip was quietness and hard work (vs. 12). Should the same be true today? Since our youth, most of us have been taught, *“If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all.”* Is this principle still important today? Why?

2. John MacArthur wrote, *“The hard-working believers were tired of having to support the lazy and were ready to stop all help to those in need, giving up all charity. Paul reminded them that the truly needy still required help and that the Thessalonians must not be negligent toward them.”* What was Paul concerned about in **verse 13**? How did Paul encourage the Galatian believers in **Gal. 6:9-10**?

3. How did Paul say the Thessalonians should respond to those Christians in Thessalonica who refused to follow his instructions in **2 Thessalonians 3 (vs. 14)**? Why? Why do you think so many Christians have a negative view of church discipline today? Should we?

4. According to Jesus, what steps should a Christian follow before implementing church discipline? (See **Matt. 18:15-17**) Why don't more Christians go to the offending individual first before talking to others? Is the intent of church discipline to punish sinning Christians or to help restore them to a right relationship with the Lord and with His church?

5. Warren Wiersbe writes, *“Church discipline is to the church member what family discipline is to a child: it is an exercise of, and evidence of, correcting love.”* How is church discipline and family discipline similar?

Part III: A peaceful end to a stormy epistle (2 Thess. 3:16-18)

1. Paul normally refers to God as *“the God of peace,”* but here he calls God *“the Lord of peace.”* Both titles mean the same. In light of the disharmony in the church at Thessalonica, why is the use of *“the Lord of peace”* especially important here (**vs. 16**)?

2. A *“salutation”* is a form of greeting (**vs. 17**). In light of the counterfeit letter that the Thessalonians had received, why do you think Paul signed this epistle with his own handwriting? Why did this become his standard practice?

3. Paul was highly intelligent and among the most educated men in the Roman world. He was a student of the Jewish rabbi Gamaliel, considered by many Jews to be Israel's greatest teacher at the time. Why would a scholar like Paul need the help of a secretary in writing his letters? (See **Rom. 16:22**) Is it possible that the Apostle Paul had eye problems? (See **2 Cor. 12:7-9; Gal. 4:14-15**) Why did God give Paul a thorn in his flesh?

4. Paul begins and ends his letters with grace (**vs. 18**). How similar were the last verses in **1 and 2 Thessalonians**? (See **1 Thess. 5:28**) The grace of God and grace among believers is essential to the health of every local church today. Warren Wiersbe writes, "*If there is trouble in the church, it is because there is trouble in somebody's heart. If Christ is Lord, then there is peace in the heart.*" What are some ways that a Christ-centered church will be different from a flesh-centered church? What should be the mark of every Christian church?

5. What is our responsibility when there is conflict in the church? (See **Rom. 12:17-18**)

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- Do not endorse the negative behavior of those who claim to be followers of Christ.
- Christians are to lovingly confront those Christians living a lifestyle of sin by following the steps of Jesus in **Matthew 18:15-17**; only then, if they won't repent do we withdraw.
- Christians should provide the needs for their own families and not depend upon the church.
- Paul taught, "*If anyone (meaning able bodied) will not work, neither shall he eat.*"
- Idleness breeds sin; the key to overcoming idleness is working hard and helping others.
- Believers in Jesus Christ are not to grow weary in doing good; even if attacked for doing so.
- Warren Wiersbe said, "*If there is trouble in the church, it is because there is trouble in somebody's heart.*"
- When Jesus is truly Lord of a church, love and peace will be reflected in the church body.