

2 Thessalonians 3 - Consequences of Poor Doctrine; Exhortation to the Idle; Ecclesiastical Separation

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2 Thessalonians 3

III. Consequences of poor doctrine (2 Thess 3:1-18)

Bad doctrine leads to bad behavior. If your beliefs or doctrine are not correct, it will filter over into your practice/daily life. Paul cleaned up their bad doctrine in 2 Thess 2, now in 2 Thess 3 he begins to clean up their bad practice, which was the result of their bad doctrine.

(1) Reciprocal prayer (3:1-5)

(A) Prayer for the missionaries (3:1-2)

(a) Spread of the message (3:1)

1 Finally, brothers *and sisters*, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, **just as it was also with you**;

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you;

1 Finally, brothers, pray for us—that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly, and that it may be honored the way it is among you.

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

- "Finally" - introduces the last major section of Paul's epistle

- Paul, an apostle, was not afraid to ask for prayer from the believers at the churches he planted and watered (Cf. Eph 6:19-20; 1 Thess 5:25)

— Paul believed that the true source of power in his ministry was the saints who were praying for him

— His request for prayer was not for his comfort, his provision, his safety, or anything else about himself: the focus of his request for prayer was on the Word of the Lord

— There are countless passages indicating that when the Word of the Lord goes out accurately, God works: Is 55:10-11; Jer 23:29; Rom 10:17; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 4:1-2

— If Paul didn't preach God's Word to the Thessalonians, they would not have been saved. The salvation of people requires the preaching of God's Word (Cf. Rom 10:17; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23)

- "...just as *it was* also with you" - in 1 Thess 1:8-9 Paul explains what the Word of God did for the Thessalonians

(b) Paul's deliverance (3:2)

2 and that we will be rescued from **troublesome and evil people; for not all have the faith**.

2 and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.

2 Also pray that we may be rescued from worthless and evil people, since not everyone holds to the faith.

2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not [the] faith.

- "...troublesome and evil people" - the fanatical Jewish opponents at Corinth; these sought to limit the spread of the gospel

— The Thessalonians had personal experience with such antagonists (Acts 17:5-9). Paul had further experience with such bitter opponents at Berea (Acts 17:13-15).

- Even as he was writing this letter, the same threatening attitude was at Corinth; the attack of followed (Acts 18:5-6,12-13)
- This is not the first time Paul has expressed his need to be protected from perverse and evil men (Cf. Acts 20:2-3; Rom 15:31; 2 Tim 4:17-18)
- "...for not all have the faith" - they are troublesome and evil because they were not saved (Cf. John 16:2-3)

(B) Prayer for the Thessalonians (3:3-5)

(a) Protection from Satan (3:3)

- 3 **But** the Lord is faithful, and He will **strengthen** and **protect** you from the evil one.
- 3 But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil *one*.
- 3 But the Lord is faithful and will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.
- 3** But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.
- "But" - in contrast to the "troublesome and evil people" who do not "have the faith" (v2), the Lord is faithful (Cf. 1 Cor 10:13; Heb 2:17; 10:23; 1 John 1:9)
- Paul's reciprocal prayer for the Thessalonians is that they would be protected from the devil
- Why does Paul pray that the Thessalonians be protected from Satan? Because Satan has wreaked havoc on believers since the Garden of Eden (see note: **Satan's Works** below)
- Paul is praying for the Thessalonians the same prayer that Jesus prayed for His disciples (Cf. Matt 6:13; John 17:15)
- "...strengthen" - *stērizō*, inner stability, to make stable; to render constant (vs. reaction to "Day of Lord" view). Cf. Luke 22:31-32 when Jesus prays for Peter.
- "...protect" - have an eye upon; conveys a military image, implying conflict and armed protection from violent attack

A Believer's Defense Against Satan

1. God's responsibility
 - Divine restraint
 - Job 1:12; 2:6 - Satan could not touch Job without God's permission
 - Luke 22:31-32 - Satan requested to sift Peter like wheat
 - 2 Thess 2:6-7 - the Restrainer
 - 1 John 5:18 - God protects believers from Satan
 - Divine intercession - all members of the Trinity are interceding for believers
 - John 17:15 - the Father
 - Rom 8:34 - the Holy Spirit
 - Heb 7:25 - the Son

2. Believer's responsibility

- Our defensive posture (Rev 20:2-3,10; 2 Peter 2:10-11)
- Avoid catering to the flesh (Eph 4:26-27)
- Resist (Eph 6:13; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9)
- Rely on the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:4)
- Put on the full armor of God (Eph 6:10-20)

Satan's Works (see Satan)

- Past
 - Lied to Adam & Eve (Gen 3:1ff)
 - Corrupted the pre-Flood gene pool (Gen 6:1-4)
 - Accused and afflicted Job (Job 1-2)
 - Disputed Michael regarding Moses' body (Jude 9)
 - Tempted David to take a census (1 Chr 21:1)
 - Accused Joshua (Zech 3:1-3)
 - Tempted Christ (Matt 4:1-11)
 - Tested Peter (Luke 22:31-33)
 - Possessed Judas (John 13:27)
 - Hindered Paul (1 Thess 2:18)
 - Afflicted Paul (2 Cor 12:7-10)
 - Influenced Ananias & Sapphira to lie (Acts 5:3-4,8)
- Present
 - Snatches God's Word (Luke 8:12)
 - Rules this world (1 John 5:19)
 - Blinds the mind to truth (2 Cor 4:4)
 - Sends false ministers (2 Cor 11:14-15)
 - Sends false gospels (2 Cor 11:3-4)
 - Sows unbelievers among believers (Matt 13:38-39)
 - Performs miracles (2 Thess 2:9)
 - Promotes immorality (Eph 2:1-3)
 - Opposes God's people (Eph 6:11-12)
 - Tempts God's people (1 Cor 7:5)
 - Uses the carnality of Christians (Eph 4:26-27)
 - Causes physical problems (Luke 13:11,16)
 - Influences civil government (Dan 10:10ff)
 - Lies, the father/source of (John 8:44)
 - Deceives the whole world (Rev 12:9; 20:3)
- Future

- Lead a one-world government (Rev 13:3-4)
- Oppose the Second Coming (Rev 17:14)
- Attempt to annihilate Israel (Rev 12)
- Bound in abyss for 1000 years (Rev 20:1-3)
- Lead a final rebellion (Rev 20:7-9)
- Cast into the lake of fire for eternity (Rev 20:10)

(b) Continued obedience (3:4)

4 We have **confidence in the Lord** concerning you, that you are doing, and will do, what we command.

4 We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will *continue to* do what we command.

4 We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do what we command.

4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

- "...confidence in the Lord" - Paul is saying, I realize you are just human beings, and I realize Satan can cause a lot of problems, but I'm praying to One more powerful than he and I'm confident that you'll continue in obedience

— Paul is addressing the middle tense of salvation (sanctification) (Cf. v1). He's not leading them to Christ, he's trying to get them to grow in Christ.

— Spiritual maturity is not gauged by the amount of time a person has been a Christian, or by how much biblical information you know. Maturity is measured in the Christian life by the amount of time a person spends *obeying* what they know.

(c) Greater intimacy with God (3:5)

5 May the Lord direct your **hearts to the love of God** and to **the perseverance of Christ**.

5 May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the endurance of the Messiah.

5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

- "...hearts" - *cardia*, the innermost being of a person

— Notice that Paul is not trying to correct their behavior or their outward works. He wants their "heart" (innermost being) to be directed toward Jesus Christ (Cf. Prov 4:23).

— Often we try to apply diligence to address our outward behavior but the Bible instructs us to apply diligence to our heart, because our heart determines the issues of life

— Paul prays that the Lord would direct the hearts of the Thessalonians (and us) into two things:

1. "...the love of God" - rather than cleaning up every single problem we have in our behavior, we instead ought to be focused on intimacy with the God who *is* love (Cf. 1 John 4:8)
 - The average Christian doesn't need to be taught or told over and over what they need to do for Jesus. They need to be taught and told over and over again what Jesus has done for them.
 - "...love" - *agapē*, the love God has for us
2. "...the perseverance of Christ" - Paul doesn't tell the Thessalonians that the need to be faithful to God; instead, he tells them of God's ability to stand up in faithfulness in all of our circumstances
 - He doesn't point to what man needs to do; he points to what God has already done, and continues to do
 - "...perseverance" - *hypomonē*, the ability to stand up in faithfulness despite severe adversity (Cf. 2 Peter 1:5-7)
 - Because God is faithful to us, regardless of our circumstances, 100% of the time, He seeks to build up in us that same faithfulness in every situation and circumstance that He puts us through (Gal 5:22-23)
 - Since *hypomonē* means perseverance through adversity, the only way to develop this in our life is for God to put us through adversity
 - Thankfully, my faithfulness to God does not determine His faithfulness to me (Cf. 2 Tim 2:13)

Look at what Thomas Jefferson wrote on the topic of man's heart, and how he realized that the Bible deals with man's heart condition as opposed to a person's outward behavior, because the outward actions of a man is evidenced by what is in his heart.



Thomas Jefferson

"My views ... are the result of a life of inquiry and reflection, and very different from the anti-Christian system imputed to me by those who know nothing of my opinions. To the corruptions of Christianity, I am, indeed, opposed; but not to the genuine precepts of Jesus Himself. I am a Christian in the only sense in which He wished any one to be; sincerely attached to his doctrines in preference to all others...His system of morals...if filled up in the style and spirit of the rich fragments He left us, would be the most perfect and sublime that has ever been taught by man...His moral doctrines...were more pure and . . .

On April 21, 1803, Jefferson wrote to Dr. Benjamin Rush, also a signer of the Declaration



Thomas Jefferson

...perfect than those of the most correct of the philosophers...gathering all into one family under the bonds of love, charity, peace, common wants and common aids. A development of this head will evince the peculiar superiority of the system of Jesus over all others. The precepts of philosophy, and of the Hebrew code, laid hold of actions only. He pushed his scrutinies into the heart of man; erected his tribunal in the region of his thoughts, and purified the waters at the fountain head."

On April 21, 1803, Jefferson wrote to Dr. Benjamin Rush, also a signer of the Declaration

(2) Exhortation to discipline the idle (3:6-15)

(A) The exhortation (3:6)

6 Now we command you, **brothers and sisters**, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you **keep away** from every **brother or sister who leads a disorderly life** and not *one* in

accordance with the **tradition which you received from us.**

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.

6 In the name of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is living in idleness and not living according to the tradition that they received from us.

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.

- "...brothers *and sisters*" - "brethren"; an important reminder that Paul is writing to believers (not a combination of believers and unbelievers)

— This is an important reminder because as you go through this passage, many people ask if Christians can really act like this. Paul tells us at the outset, Yes, they can (and do).

— If a Christian could not act like this, there would be no reason for the Bible to discuss the notion of ecclesiastical separation or church discipline. What is the need for church discipline if the person sinning is not a believer?

— Again later in this verse, Paul says "every brother *or sister* who leads a disorderly life..." confirming once again that he's addressing believers, and that believers who aren't walking in the Spirit can lead disorderly lives

- "...keep away" - *stellō*, separate, avoid, do not support financially or otherwise; what Paul is talking about here is "ecclesiastical separation" (v14; Cf. 2 Tim 3:5). See note:

Ecclesiastical Separation below.

— Out of all the doctrines in the church, this one is one of the most neglected because of the spirit of this age. The predominant spirit today is ecumenism, all religions and beliefs coming together and uniting. They love to quote Jesus' high priestly prayer (John 17:xx) where Jesus prayed to the Father that believers would become "one". This is not a prayer for ecumenism; this prayer was answered at Pentecost.

— How does the church remain pure in an impure and immoral world? The Bible gives us two doctrines to follow:

1. Ecclesiastical separation
2. Church discipline

— Failing to follow one or both of these doctrines in a believer's life or the church will eventually all but guarantee doctrinal corruption

- "...brother *or sister* who leads a disorderly life" - a carnal believer (Cf. 1 Cor 3:1-3)

- "...tradition which you received from us" - Paul was functioning as an apostle, so he had full authority to command believers to follow his teaching

— In v4, Paul said he had full confidence that the Thessalonians would "do what he commands"

Ecclesiastical Separation

1. Why separate?

- a. Not based in hatred for the person, but rather a recognition that their bad behavior and/or bad doctrine will influence me more than my good behavior and/or good doctrine will influence them
 - It's the idea of not being "unequally yoked," which usually applies to marriage, but can rightly be applied to many different areas of our lives, including those we associate with
- b. Gives the world a false sense of security - when you're aligned with people, churches, or other or Christian organizations who buy into bad doctrine, your witness against sin is diminished
 - For example, if you support a Christian college or seminary that says homosexual marriage is ok, the unsaved world will interpret it as homosexuality must not be that bad; it's a sign of approval
 - It's a signal of compromise to the unsaved world, and gives them a sense of security in their unbiblical beliefs
- c. Loss of distinctiveness and power - Cf. Lot; the church has the authority to speak to the unsaved world to the extent that the church is different than the unsaved world. The moment the church loses its distinctiveness from the world is the moment the church loses its power to speak truth into the world.

2. Biblical basis for separation?

- a. 2 Thess 3:6,14 - keep away from and do not associate with believers who choose to not obey Paul's instructions or believe in the fundamentals of the faith
- b. 1 Cor 5:11 - a man in the Corinth church was involved in incest, and Paul tells the Corinthians that they should have kicked that guy out of their church a long time ago
- c. 2 Cor 6:14-18 - do not be unequally yoked; pertains not only to marriage, but to any and all contractual, societal, friendship, or business agreements we may enter into. Not limited strictly to persons...we can be unequally yoked with churches, missions, or other para-church organizations and be unequally yoked.
- d. Rom 16:17: Now I urge you, brothers *and sisters*, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

- Rom 16:17 [KJV]: Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.
- e. Eph 5:11: Do not participate in the useless deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;
 - Rather than join or cooperate with them, you are to "expose them"
- f. Titus 3:9-11 - "reject" a heretic who attempts to introduce new splinter truth, that is clearly against Scripture. Give him two warnings, then reject him.
- g. 2 John 7-11 - do not allow "deceivers" including those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh into your fellowship/church; do not even give him a greeting
- 3. What to separate from?
 - a. False doctrine (1 Tim 4:16; Titus 1:9)
 - b. Divisive persons (Rom 16:17; Titus 3:9-11)
 - c. Immorality (1 Cor 5:9-11; Eph 5:11)
 - d. General disobedience to Scripture (2 Thess 3:6,14)

Fundamentals of the Faith (to identify those to separate from)

1. Creation/Fall (Rom 5:14)
2. Inspiration/inerrancy of Scripture (Matt 5:18; John 17:17; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21)
3. Salvation by faith alone
4. Eternal existence of heaven/hell (Dan 12:2; Matt 25:46)
5. Trinity
6. Virgin birth of Christ
7. Deity of Christ
8. Atoning death of Christ (Is 53:3-6; 1 Peter 2:24)
9. Bodily resurrection of Christ (John 20:27-28; 1 Cor 15:14)
10. Bodily second advent of Christ (Job 19:25; Zech 14:4; Acts 1:9-11)

(B) A better example (3:7-9)

- 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow **our example**, because we did not **act in an undisciplined way** among you,
- 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,
- 7 For you yourselves know what you must do to imitate us. We never lived in idleness among you.
- 7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

- "...our example" - what was Paul's example? Paul practiced what he taught; he was industrious to support himself, even though he had a right as an apostle to receive funds for his ministry, he never insisted upon his rights.
- Paul was economically self-sufficient. He labored himself to provide for his basic needs. Although he preached the return of Christ constantly, he never taught that since it is imminent, he never slacked off in either his labor or his ministry because of it.
- "...act in an undisciplined way" - Paul was self-disciplined
- In 1 Tim 4:7-16, Paul lays out for Timothy (a pastor) 12 imperatives/commands

8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;

8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;

8 We did not eat anyone's food without paying for it. Instead, with toil and labor we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to any of you.

8 Neither 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:

- Paul told the Thessalonians the same thing in 1 Thess 2:9

- Paul's primary occupation, other than a missionary and apostle, was as a tentmaker (Cf. Acts 18:3)

- The Thessalonians were using the Second Coming, which they thought was just around the corner (because of the forged letter they received, coupled with the persecution that had begun) they thought the Tribulation period had begun, thus the Second Coming would be right around the corner.

- In contrast, Paul, who constantly taught about the return of the Lord, never lifted his foot off the gas pedal, either in his occupation or in his missionary/apostolic duties

9 not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a role model for you, so that you would follow our example.

9 not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.

9 It is not as though we did not have that right, but we wanted to give you an example to follow.

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

- Paul confirms that biblically, he had the right to request donations and support from those churches to whom he ministered, but he chose to forfeit that right so he could be an example to the Thessalonians

— Paul talks about the rights of a minister/missionary to receive support from those they minister to (1 Cor 9:4-18; Luke 10:7; Gal 6:6; 1 Tim 5:17-18)

(C) The reasons for the exhortation (3:10-11)

10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.

10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.

10 While we were with you, we gave this order: "If anyone doesn't want to work, he shouldn't eat."

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

- Paul says, I role-modeled a productive lifestyle for you when I was with you in person, planted the church, and taught you. Then when I wrote to you the first time (1 Thess 4:11), I commanded you to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, mind your own business, and work with your hands.

- Because of the Thessalonian's poor eschatology, many had decided to stop working and taking care of personal responsibilities because they believed the Second Coming was going to happen in less than seven years (they believed they were currently in the Tribulation period).

— Paul says here, if that's the case, your brothers and sisters in Christ should not provide for them

— Idleness in this case was not the inability to work, but the unwillingness to work

— Paul says, Based on your incorrect eschatology, if you continue to not work, you won't eat. This is a concept that's not new...it goes all the way back to Eden ("...by the sweat of *your* face," Gen 3:19; Cf. 1 Tim 5:8)

11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.

11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.

11 We hear that some of you are living in idleness. You are not busy working—you are busy interfering in other people's lives!

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

- When a person does not have a job to do or some productive way to spend their time, they become busybodies

— Not channeling energy into proper pursuits leaves energy to be misdirected (Prov 25:17; 1 Tim 5:13). Leisure can be lethal

(D) The exhortation for the lazy to work (3:12)

12 Now we command and exhort such persons in the Lord Jesus Christ to work **peacefully** and eat their own bread.

12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

12 We order and encourage such people by the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

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.

- Paul commanded those who were idle busybodies to support themselves ("eat their own bread"). He calls out those in Thessalonica who used false doctrine as cover for their own laziness.

- "...peacefully" - emphatic in Greek; points to the quality of mind that is to be associated with their working

— It denotes a condition of inward peace and tranquility reflecting itself in outward calmness, the opposite of fussy activity as busybodies

— It should be understood as the opposite of the feverish excitement of mind stimulated by the belief that the Rapture was at hand

— They clearly believed in the imminent coming of Christ in the Rapture, but they equated "imminent" with "soon." Instead of believing that Christ *could* come soon, they were convinced He *would* come soon, and therefore work was no longer necessary.

It is interesting that in these eschatological epistles, so much is devoted to practical living.

(E) The need for patience (3:13)

13 But as for you, brothers *and sisters*, do not grow weary of doing good.

13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.

13 Brothers, do not get tired of doing what is right.

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

- Refers to the law of sowing and reaping (Cf. Gal 6:7-9; Eccl 11:4)

(F) The procedure of discipline (3:14-15)

(a) Negative aspect: disassociation and shame (3:14)

14 If anyone does not **obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person so as not to associate with him**, so that he will be **put to shame**.

14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.

14 If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of him. Have nothing to do with him so that he will feel ashamed.

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.

- "...obey our instruction" - in context, refers to the lazy brethren (v10-11)

- "...in this letter" - in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians

- "...take special note of that person so as not to associate with him" - ecclesiastical separation (Cf. v6)

- "...put to shame" - the entire goal of church discipline is to shame the guilty brother or sister into repentance; it is restoration, not destruction

- Unlike today, where if you're kicked out of a church you can just go down the street to another church...in the 1st century, if you were kicked out of a church, you were essentially kicked out of Christianity (although obviously do not lose your salvation)

- At that time, a believer could not function as a Christian if they were not regularly attending the local church

- The fact that Paul instructs the church to exercise discipline on the lazy brethren indicates that these were believers; there is no instruction to exercise church discipline on an unbeliever

Rom 16:17 [NASB20]: Now I urge you, brothers *and sisters*, **keep your eye on** those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and **turn away** from them.

Rom 16:17 [KJV]: Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them** which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and **avoid them**.

Church Discipline

- Command (1 Cor 5:13)
- Reason (Gal 5:9)
- Offenses meriting discipline
 - Disobedience (2 Thess 3:6,14-15)
 - Immorality (1 Cor 5:9-11,13)
 - Divisiveness (Rom 16:17-18)
- Procedure
 - For the Church body (Matt 18:15-17)
 - For the Pastor/Elder (1 Tim 5:19-20)
- Goal (2 Thess 3:14-15)

(b) Positive aspect: treat disciplinee as a brother (3:15)

15 And yet do not regard *that person* as **an enemy**, but **admonish** *that one* as a brother or sister.

15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

15 Yet, don't treat him like an enemy, but warn him like a brother.

15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

- "...an enemy" - *echthros*, both Jesus and Paul use this word to describe the devil (Matt 13:25,28), an unsaved person (Rom 5:10), or a false teacher (Phil 3:18)

— So when you're dealing with a Christian under church discipline, because they keep going back to the sin nature, you don't treat them as you would an enemy (i.e. Satan)

— The goal is restoration, not punishment. Punishment for sin always comes from God, not man. Man's job is restoration. It is not exclusion, but reformation; deprived of intimate association, but not absolute separation.

— In 1 Cor 5:11, Paul included "not even to eat with" such a person (referring to the sexually immoral, drunkards, etc.). That command is not given here.

— If the person under discipline self-corrects, we are then to regard them as a brother. Our first job is to shame them into repentance, then once they repent, we treat them like a brother.

— The fact that Paul states that after they repent we are to treat them like a brother is more evidence that Paul is talking about Christians, and that Christians can indulge their sin nature and be placed under ecclesiastical separation and/or church discipline.

— The idea is social pressure, for which the goal is to embarrass the offender into changing their ways

— Allowing a believer to continue in blatantly unchristian, exploitive or disruptive behavior is not a kindness, either to the church, the erring believer, or the watching non-Christian public

— The example of the man in incest in 1 Cor 5:5...the Corinthian church initially overlooked his sin, then later (after receiving Paul's letter) excommunicated him. Later, in 2 Cor 2:6-8, after the man had repented, they would not let him back into the church.

- "...admonish" - *noutheteō*, imperative mood meaning to warn or exhort (Cf. Titus 3:10)

— The context here is one Christian "admonishing" another Christian

— Many Christians believe in the 11th Commandment: Thou shalt not criticize another Christian. However the Bible explicit states that if another believer's doctrine is non-biblical, we are *commanded* to confront them.

It is regrettable that today social pressure often has very little influence on erring brethren. Rather than submit to church discipline, many Christians simply change churches.

(3) Conclusion (3:16-18)

(A) Benediction of peace (3:16)

16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!

16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!

16 Now may the Lord of peace give you his peace at all times and in every way. May the Lord be with all of you.

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.

(B) Claim of authorship (3:17)

17 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.

17 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.

17 I, Paul, am writing this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine. It is the way I write.

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

- Paul authenticates this letter to the Thessalonians so they wouldn't be tricked by a forged letter as if from Paul (Cf. 2:1-2)

— Paul points out his writing style and "signature" because the Thessalonians were prone to think something was written by Paul that actually wasn't, and it was causing a theological "earthquake" in their lives (Cf. Gal 6:11; 1 Cor 16:21)

— Paul had just mentioned "peace" (v16), and a believer can't walk in the peace of God if they are upset and carried about by every wind of doctrine

— We can develop from this a general call to discernment...a Christian should not believe everything they are told, even from the pulpit. Our standard of truth is not the pulpit, our study Bible, or some YouTube scholar we like to follow. Our standard of truth is only and solely God's Word.

(C) Benediction of grace (3:18)

18 The **grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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

18 May the grace of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, be with all of you. Amen.

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

- "...grace" - *charis*, a benefit applied to my account that I did nothing to deserve; opposite of justice