

Thessalonians

A Careful Study Of Thessalonians

February 06, 2022

I. Introduction

A. **2 Thessalonians 3:11-18** . . . For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. [12] Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. [13] But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. [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. [15] Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. [16] Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! [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. [18] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

B. Pray

II. Protecting the spiritual health of the church and love for one another

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

1. Though there are many manifestations of an undisciplined life, Paul is addressing just two of them:
 - a. not working when you could and should work,
 - b. and wasting the time that could be used for working to instead gossip or stick your nose into other people's business.
2. It is my opinion that in older teens and adults an undisciplined life is a chosen life. The reality is, we have the ability to live a disciplined life. But we must choose such a life and then put forth the effort required to live such a life. Therefore, to choose something other than a disciplined life is to choose an undisciplined life.
3. When we choose an undisciplined life, we are choosing a lazy and irresponsible life. We are choosing to forsake self-control and make our circumstances, feelings, fears, desires, and emotions the deciding factors in how we will live. We are choosing to turn away from the kind of beliefs and values that motivate good, responsible, loving behavior and embrace beliefs and values that motivate selfish, undisciplined behavior. And we are choosing a life focused on going

- our own way and doing our own thing regardless of the hurtful or harmful effects it has on others.
4. The opposite of an undisciplined life is a disciplined life. To live a disciplined life as a Christian, we must choose beliefs and values that compel us to use self-control. We must set goals, make plans, and establish routines. And we must focus our attention on accomplishing our goals so that we live a godly life that brings glory to God and a good reputation to Christianity.
 5. Here in **vs 11**, Paul is pointing out that an undisciplined life is a wayward life that is straying from the path of godliness, and thus an unchristian life. And in **vs 13**, Paul exhorts us to not grow weary of doing good, that is, to persevere in living a disciplined life.
 6. In other words, the Christian life is to be a disciplined, self-controlled, intentionally godly life that is focused on fulfilling the purposes God had in saving us.
- B. To help us see the amount of discipline and self-control required for living the Christian life, Paul likens it to an athlete training for the games – and probably the Olympic games. Then Paul uses himself as an example of living this disciplined life. We read this in –
1. **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win (*requires discipline, self-control, focus, and a motivating set of beliefs and values*). [25] Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable (*what we get out of our efforts is eternal, while theirs is temporary*). [26] Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; [27] but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”
 2. In **2 Thessalonians**, Paul is talking about living a disciplined Christian life in relation to work and gossip. However, we can take the principles involved and apply them to many, if not every other area of the Christian life.
 3. In fact, Paul does this in advising Timothy when he told Timothy to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; [8] for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come” (**1 Timothy 4:7-8**).

4. And in speaking of the nine fruits of the Spirit, Paul makes self-control the final one – as if it caps off all the others (**Galatians 5:22-23**).
5. The reality is, responsible Christian living requires discipline, self-control, an intentional focus on spiritual growth, godly beliefs and values, a guarded mind, and the subduing of irrational fears, anxiety, and worldly desires.
 - a. It is also a reality that we must have God's presence, assistance, empowerment, and the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit for this kind of effort to produce Christ-likeness in us. And of course, we will be greatly helped if we use God's word and rely on other believers to help and encourage us on our way.
 - b. Yet in spite of what we have to have from God – which we do have if we are true Christians – we also have to choose to intentionally, purposefully, and continuously discipline ourselves for the sake of becoming and continuing to be what God wants us to be.
 - c. Therefore, without God's part, your efforts cannot accomplish the transformation of heart, mind, words, and deeds that God intends – which is to become holy in all your behavior just as He is holy. However, without intentional, planned, continuing efforts on your part, God's part will have no transforming effect on your life.
6. Paul tied these two parts together in **Philippians 2:12b-13**, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; [13] for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."
 - a. Peter said it like this in **2 Peter 1:3-4**, "[God's] divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. [4] For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."
 - (1) In **vs 5-7**, Peter follows what God does for us with a step-by-step process that if we follow it will progressively take us from beginning faith to loving as God loves.
7. Are you treating your own growth in godliness as if you are an athlete who is intentionally and purposefully exercising self-control, using self-discipline, following a plan, and training regularly in order to live the Christian life as God intends it to be lived?

- a. If you are, that is truly commendable.
 - b. If you aren't, I urge you to consider what you could add or subtract from your daily routines in order to – as Paul says – “run in such a way that you may win?”
- C. [12] Now such persons we **command** and **exhort** (*to exhort is to urge someone to specific action by using reason and logic*) in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.
 1. The importance of maintaining a Christian work ethic – as opposed to freeloading off others and wasting time being a busybody – is affirmed by Paul's use of the words, **command** and **exhort**.
 2. Once again, I want to acknowledge that no one among us is trying to freeload off others among us. However, if we consider that one of the underlying issues in **vs 11-12** is time use, then we can apply that issue to ourselves. So let me ask –
 3. Though you work and provide as you should, do you waste time and energy on unprofitable things – time and energy that could and most probably should be used for more spiritually beneficial, eternally profitable things?
 - a. One of the common weaknesses among Christians is the failure to set aside and protect the time needed to draw ever nearer to God and continue growing in Christ-likeness. It is as if we expect to run well in the race of the Christian life without protecting time for training and proper preparation.
 - b. I know it is easy to get busy, especially if you are a mother with children at home. Yet I also know that when it comes to making time for what is truly valuable and important, we do it.
 - c. Therefore, if you are not protecting the time necessary to “run the Christian life in such a way that you may win,” then I urge you to make a sincere effort to do so. Training and preparation take time – but as Paul said in **1 Timothy 4:7-8**, this kind of discipline “holds [the] promise [of victory] for the present life and also for the life to come.”
- D. [13] But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of (*tired of, become impatient with*) doing good.
 1. In a world where sin is more popular than righteousness, where sinful ways and means seem to make life easier and safer, where sinners seem to have all the fun, where things break and people disappoint or even mistreat us, where justice isn't as common as it

- ought to be, and where living a godly life is hard work and often unappreciated, it is easy to grow weary of doing what is good.
2. This is one of the reasons many Christians start out running this race with zeal and end up walking or even sitting down.
 3. Paul addressed this problem in **Galatians 6:9-10**, “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. [10] So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”
- E. [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. [15] Yet do not regard him as an **enemy** (*someone who has turned against you to do you harm*), but **admonish him** (*reprove, instruct, counsel gently, kindly, yet seriously*) as **a brother** (*a member of the family even though he is wayward and needing discipline*).
1. This letter was not the first time the unruly had heard that if they could work, they were to work and provide for themselves.
 - a. They were taught this when Paul was with them and they read it in his first letter to them. So, they were well acquainted with the Christian work ethic and what was expected of them as believers.
 - b. In other words, they had had sufficient time to make the kind of changes necessary to begin living accordingly. But they hadn’t.
 - c. Therefore, the time for encouraging and urging right behavior was over. Now it was time for discipline.
 2. Once again Paul affirms that there are two sides to this problem – the wayward Christian’s side and the sincere believer’s side.
 - a. Now that it is time for discipline, the sincere believers are to make a note of who the wayward believers are in order to shame them into good behavior by staying away from them.
 - b. In an honor/shame culture, you gain personal honor or shame from the group to whom you belong. To be publicly shunned by your group for unacceptable behavior is to lose honor.
 - c. Therefore, this would have been a significant loss of honor for these wayward believers, because they were already being shunned by their family and friends, and persecuted by the community at large for becoming Christians.
 3. However, the Christians doing the shunning are not to be like the world and treat those being shunned as enemies – that is, as if they were no longer members of the Body of Christ.

- a. Instead, the shunning Christians are to treat those being shunned as just as much a member of their Christian family as everyone else in the church, even though they are being shunned.
- b. In other words, shunning is not for the purpose of breaking the relationship – as if we want nothing more to do with the wayward Christian. Shunning is an effort to bring the wayward believer back to God’s way of living, which in turn restores him to the right kind of relationship with the rest of the church.

III. Conclusion

- A. I want to conclude today’s teaching by expanding beyond church discipline the application of the words, “take special note of that person.” And I am doing this by way of reminder, not for correction.
 1. According to **Romans 15:1-2**, it is the responsibility of the strong Christians to help the weaker ones.
 2. Awareness of the needs, emotional and mental state, and the spiritual condition of those around us is important to being a family that sticks together, supports each other, and helps each other in ways that not only meet physical needs, but also spiritual, emotional, and mental needs.
 3. Upon becoming aware of another’s needs, we ought to do what we can to support them as they go through a difficult time.
 - a. **Galatians 6:2** speaks of this as bearing one another's burdens, and thereby fulfilling the law of Christ – which is to love one another.
 - b. **Romans 12:15** speaks of this as weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice.
 - c. **Hebrews 12:12** speaks of this as strengthening the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble.
 4. And why do we do this? Let me give you just three reasons. **First**, we do this because we love them and want to comfort them. **Second**, we do this to ease their pain and suffering so it is not as bad as it would be without our help. And **third**, we do this to encourage them to keep trusting in God and relying on His goodness in spite of their suffering.