

1/11/26

The Importance Of Church Discipline

2Thess 3:6, 14-15

Paul now turns to some practical advice regarding disorderly saints, which may appear to be harsh and unloving for the Thessalonians to execute, but in reality, is the most loving thing to do.

Paul has prepared the way for church discipline of those who were being idle, not working and being busybodies in other people's matters in two ways.
2Thess. 3:6-15

1. He has expressed his confidence in the Lord concerning their obedience to the things he would command. 2Thess. 3:4

2. He has prayed that their obedience to what He commands that it be done in God's agape love and after the patience of Christ. 2Thess. 3:5

The entire section centers on the individuals who had refused to work for a living and were living off others.
1. This is the second longest section in the letter, the first being the Lord's Coming. 2Thess. 2:1-12

2. Paul had already been informed as to the problem when he wrote his first letter, "that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you." 1Thess. 4:11

3. Paul equally recognized there were some who needed legitimate help, "See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all." 1Thess. 5:14

I have divided the section in the following way.

2Thess. 3:6-18

1. The apostolic proclamation regarding discipline.
vs. 6, 14-15

2. The apostolic example regarding the work ethic. vs. 7-10

3. The apostolic directive regarding the abusive and faithful. vs. 11-13

4. The apostolic benediction regarding the Thessalonians. vs. 16-18

We want to look at Paul's apostolic proclamation regarding church discipline at Thessalonica, which is characterized by three things. 2Thess. 3:6, 14-15

- I. The authority for church discipline. vs. 6a-c
- II. The authorized action for church discipline. vs. 6d
- III. The authorized follow up for church discipline. vs. 14-15

I. The authority for church discipline. vs. 6a-c

A. The authority was through the apostolic agents.
* "But we command you." vs. 6a

1. The ones giving the command are apostles, indicated by the word "we".

- a. Paul had already declared the apostolic authority of Silas, Timothy and himself, in his first letter. 1Thess. 2:6
- b. The command was mutual and unanimous by the three apostles, it was not one man's authority or contentious desire.
- 2. The apostles of Jesus were many, at the time Paul was writing.
 - a. There were the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus after He prayed all night. Lk 6:12-16
 - b. There were the seventy apostles Jesus sent out besides the twelve. Lk. 10:1
 - c. There were other apostles after the twelve.
 - 1) Matthias was chosen as the replacement of Judas. Acts 1:26
 - 2) Barnabas is called an apostle. Acts 14:14
 - d. There was Paul, who the Lord said to Ananias, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel." Acts 9:15
 - 1) Paul calls himself the apostle of the Gentiles. Rom. 11:13
 - 2) Paul considered himself the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church. 1Cor. 15:9

- 3) Paul boldly declared to be an apostle not of men, but of God. Gal. 1:1
- 3. The command was to their brethren.
 - a. The word command "paraggello" means to charge, announce or transmit a message along from one to another.
 - 1) The word refers to military orders that are being passed on to them.
 - 2) The moment a person accepts Jesus as their Lord and Savior they are under His order for they are born into warfare. vs. 4, 6, 10, 12
 - b. The word brethren "adelphos", means born of the same womb, into the same family.
 - 1) The Thessalonians and the apostles were bound together in the army of God by virtue of being in the family of God.
 - 2) The Thessalonians and the apostles were under the same commands having the same heavenly Father.
- B. The authority was divine in nature and origin.
 - * "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ". vs. 6c
 - 1. The phrase "in the name" identifies the person who has the authority to command whatever is commanded.
 - a. In the Old Testament Moses asked God His name and He said, "I Am, that I

Am”, by this name He had not revealed Himself. Ex. 3:13-14

- b. The phrase is a verb form, literally, the becoming One.
- c. God would become all and everything they would ever need.
- d. A name stood for character and reputation.

* “According to Your name, O God, So is Your praise to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is full of righteousness.” Ps. 48:10

2. The original orders came from the God-Man.
 - a. The title Lord “kurios” means master or owner.
 - 1) Jesus had bought the Thessalonians with a price, His death and resurrection, they were not their own. 1Cor. 6:20
 - 2) Jesus was their personal Lord who had saved them from their sins and given them hope of being delivered from the wrath to come. 1Thess. 1:10
 - b. The name Jesus is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name Joshua.
 - 1) The name Joshua in Hebrew is the contraction of “Yahweh-shua”, which means Yahweh is salvation.
 - 2) The name Jesus “Iesous” therefore means “Yahweh is salvation” by

virtue of the fact that He being God became man. Jn. 1:1, 14; Phil. 2:5-11

- c. The title Christ “Christos”, means the anointed.
 - 1) Jesus was the anointed Messiah of God.
 - 2) Jesus was the One Who fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies, over three hundred at His First Coming.
 - 3) Jesus, the Lord was the One who had all the authority by virtue of His ability to defeat death and impart life by His own resurrection.
- 3. The apostles were handing down orders that were handed to them by the captain of their salvation, Jesus Christ.
 - a. That meant they were under the same orders.
 - b. That meant they were first to be doers of what they told others.
 - c. That meant they were representatives of the person of Jesus.

Illustration

Luther refused to recant before the authorities of the Catholic church, due to the fact that his conscience was bound and held captive to the authority of the Scriptures and his Lord Jesus Christ.

Application

1. All authority vested on the believer today is delegated authority as a representative of Christ.

* “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”

2Cor. 5:20

 - a. Each of us is to do what we do for His glory.
 - b. Each of us is to do what we do in His love.
2. No one has apostolic authority today as the twelve apostles or Paul, speaking by Inspired revelation.

2Tim. 3:16-17; 2Pet. 1:20-21

- a. There are at times movement that arise like the “shepheding doctrine” of the 70’s and 80’s led by figures like Derek Prince, Bob Mumford, Ern Baxter and others, who focused on intense discipleship, spiritual covering, and submission to “shepherds” (leaders) for guidance in all life decisions, a cult-like control due to its demanding covenant relationships.
- b. There are waves of self proclaimed prophets from time to time claiming new prophetic revelations, such as the Kansas City Prophets in the 80’s, 90’s, like Mike Bickle, Paul Cain, and Bob Jones, but Scripture and time expose their falsehood. 2Pet. 2
- c. The New Apostolic Reformation from the 90’s to the present teach a Seven Mountain Mandate that combines elements of Pentecostalism, evangelicism, the seven are family, religion, education, media, entertainment, business, and government to advocate for spiritual warfare to

take back territory from Satan and bring about Christian dominion over all aspects of society and end or weaken the separation of church and state. NAR leaders often call themselves apostles and prophets, also known as Kingdom or Dominion theology.

- 1) Nowhere in Scripture is the church commanded to do this to bring in the Kingdom, the only valid one is the family!
- 2) Jesus did not target Himself or command any of the six, nor Paul!
- d. Donald Anderson McGavran (December 15, 1897 – July 10, 1990) was a missiologist the founding Dean of the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena and was followed by Peter Wagner who headed the Chruch Growth movment at Fuller Seminary and the one who gave the NAR their name and was a key figure in the movement till his death in 2016.
- d. There are power hungry leaders that want to act as popes over areas and men by virtue of their high recognition or position in movements at times, going beyond their measure of minsitry, such as the New Apostolic Reformation or the Emergent Church that teaches the word subjectively and culturally. 1Cor. 10:13
3. The only authority that is supreme in a person’s life is the Lord Jesus authority. Phil. 2:6-11

* “Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made

Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

This is the authority for church discipline!

II. The authorized action for church discipline. vs. 6c

- A. In order to exercise loving discipline towards the disorderly.
 - * “That you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly.” vs. 6c
 - 1. The believer was to withdraw from believers walking contrary to the Christian norm.
 - a. The reference is to idleness, not working and being busybodies. vs. 11
 - b. The word withdraw “stellemai”, means to abstain from or avoid, and is used to shorten the sail.
 - 1) The middle voice reveals their own benefit so as not to give the

- impression to the sinner or any other person they condoned such conduct.
- 2) The withdrawal is for discipline with the purpose of restoration, not mere castigation.
- 2. The believer is not to hesitate or make an exception “every brother”.
 - a. The word disorderly “ataktos”, means irregular or insubordinate, out of order, literally to play truant.
 - 1) The word was used in early accounts of Greek fathers who apprenticed their sons to a weaver for one year.
 - a) This contract provided for the details of food and clothing for a year.
 - b) If the son failed to work any day, he would have to make up the days of his truancy.
 - c) The word is also used of a military soldier stepping out of ranks or desertion.
 - 2) Their disobedience is ongoing.
 - a) They were mentioned in the first letter. 1Thess. 5:14
 - b) They are referred to again. 2Thess. 3:6, 11
 - c) This is the principle of Matthew 18, that applies to all members of the church body, first by one, then two or three, last, the elders, without exception! Matt. 18:15-20

B. In order to make people accountable to the contradiction of the Scriptures.

* “Not according to the tradition which he received from us.” vs. 6c

1. The standard is the Scriptures not our own opinions.
 - a. The word for tradition “paradosis” means that handed down.
 - 1) The word is used for the divine revelation of the gospel, the teaching the apostle and his companions had imparted to them at the founding of the church. 1Thess. 2:13
 - 2) The word includes the teaching through the two letters written to them. 2Thess. 2:15; 3:4
 - b. The tradition of human origin is religious or philosophical, often contradicting God’s divine revelation.
 - 1) Like the traditions of the elders. Mk 7:3
 - 2) Like the philosophy, empty deceit and according to the basic principles of the world, not according to Christ. Col 2:8
2. The accountability is based on privilege.
 - a. The apostle says these individuals “received “paralambano” from us”, which means to associate or take unto one’s self.

- 1) The word is used of Joseph taking Mary as his wife. Matt. 1:24
- 2) The word is used of the Thessalonians embracing the gospel. 1Thess. 2:13; 4:1
- b. The reason for discipline is always the measure of light or knowledge one possesses.
 - 1) To hold one accountable for what they are ignorant of would be unfair.
 - 2) To not hold one accountable for what they know, would be derelict.

Illustration

Just as a father tells his child to avoid associating with those who are undisciplined ethically or morally, so as not to be identified as being of the same character or corrupted, so Paul makes his appeal.

Application

1. This loving discipline to be experienced is to the believer, not the non-believer. 1Cor. 5:9-13

* “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.

For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”

* Notice covetousness is as bad as sexual sin!

2. Our loving confrontation can be a help to turn others. Gal. 2:11-14

“Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

This is the authorized action for church discipline!

III. The authorized follow up for church discipline. vs. 14-15

A. In order to confront the person through loving discipline towards the disobedient.

* “And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person.” vs. 14a-b

1. This is not the same as in verse six, this person has not only chosen to walk contrary to the Christian norm, but now has chosen

after hearing this letter, to rebel and disobey the correction according to Scripture.

a. The condition is clear, “If anyone does not obey our words in this epistle”.

1) The word obey “hupakou”, means to hear and act on what is heard.

2) The word is used of children and servants. Eph. 6:1, 5; Col. 3:20, 22

3) The word is used of those under vengeance. 2Thess. 1:8

* This epistle and our words were divine revelation!

2. This is to lead the leadership to more severe actions by noting the individual.

a. The term note “seemioomai”, means to distinguish and mark in a serious way not mere acknowledgment.

b. Literally to put a tag and is used in papyri for a signature to a receipt. (1x N.T.)

1) This is in the middle voice, they are doing it for their own benefit as leader and the church, to not be associated with such a belief or practice.

2) Paul told the Romans much the same thing, to mark those who cause divisions and avoid them. Rom. 16:17

c. Paul is talking to the church, therefore this must be publicly. 1Tim. 5:20; Rom. 16:17

B. In order to curtail the persons associate with the church.

* “And do not keep company with him.” vs. 14b

1. The word company “sunanamignum”, means literally not to mix up along with him.
 - a. The term is used three times in the New Testament.
 - b. Twice in the Corinthian epistle and once here in our text. 1Cor 5:9, 11
2. This command seems to be different in two ways.
 - a. First this command is more severe than the one in verse six.
 - b. Second this command also seems to be less sever than excommunication because it is not stated here as elsewhere. 1Cor. 5:2, 5; 1Tim. 1:20; Tit. 3:10
 - c. This command meant restricted and limited fellowship, wheather it was not allowing them to attend the love feast or partake of the Lord’s table, we do not know?

C. In order to bring them to conviction and repentance.

* “That he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” vs. 14c-15

1. The purpose of confrontation is always to turn the person from his error. vs. 14c

* Ja. 5:19-20, 1Pet. 4:8

- a. The word ashamed “entrepe” to have one’s thoughts turned in on oneself for conviction and repentance.
- b. The purpose expressed is in the aorist passive subjuctive, ingressive, that he may get to be put to shame.
- c. The purpose of confrontation is for restoration through forgiveness, never revenge. Gal. 6:1-2; Matt. 18:15-18

2. The posture of the leaders and church is to be the expection of resoration. vs. 15

- a. Paul cautions them, “Yet do not count him as an enemy. vs. 15a
 - 1) The caution is a reminder to them of their attitude in heart.
 - 2) Don’t harbor resentment or bitterness, he is not your enemy. 2Cor. 2:3-8
- b. Paul encourageous them, “But admonish him as a brother.” vs. 15b
 - 1) Your actions should be motivated by agape love.
 - 2) The word admonish “noutheteo” means to put in mind, count on or warn. Col. 1:28; 3:16; 1Thess. 5:12
 - a) The word appears in the noun form “nouthesia” and the verb form “noutheteo” whose basic meaning is

“to put in mind”, be it by training of word, encouragement or reproof.

b) Discipline is not the issue or point of the word “noutheteo”, but personal responsibility to professing they are Christians.

c) This is what should be going on in the church, accountability to one’s responsibility as a Christian!

* The Biblical way of confrontation or spiritual discipline is not to be based on presuppositions of the systems of man and finding a Scripture to fit the occasion out of its context. 2Pet. 3:16

3. The Biblical way to deal with disorderly Christians is by confronting, warning and admonishing them to turn from wrong actions, behavior or attitudes and obey Christ, His Word, by the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

a. The Bible doesn’t concentrate on the “Whys” of life, but on “what” the believer is to do and “How” he is to respond!

b. Paul’s disciplinary proclamation:

- 1)** It applies to all!
- 2)** It is a warning to all!
- 3)** It is protection to all!

Illustration

One day a father listened to his son who had returned home from graduating from college and he said, “Dad, I don’t believe in the Bible or Jesus any more...His father painfully asked him to leave everything that he had except for the clothes he was wearing, for he had received everything from his dad. He did this in hope of having his son see his error and folly in trusting anything, but Jesus.

Application

1. May each of us ask God for the wisdom and strength to confront and follow through with spiritual discipline according to the Scriptures.
 - a.** “Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.” Prov. 27:5
 - b.** “Faithful are the wounds of a friend but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful”. Prov. 27:6
2. May all of us act with the motive of agape love and restoration in the fear of God.

* “My son, fear the LORD and the king; Do not associate with those given to change; For their calamity will rise suddenly, And who knows the ruin those two can bring? These things also belong to the wise: It is not good to show partiality in judgment. He who says to the wicked, “You are righteous” Him the people will curse; Nations will abhor him. But those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, And a good blessing will come upon them.” Prov. 24:21-25

3. The way we are to confront one another is clear in the Scriptures.

- a. Meekness, godly fear, compassion and to be motivated by God's love in order to reconcile not castigate Gal.6:1
- b. This is to be done by every believer when needed as well as Pastor not just professionals (Priesthood of Believers 1Pet. 2:19-12
* If you know the Word of God!
- c. Confrontation is to be characterized by three things; first recognition of the problem regarding faith and practice, second the goal of correcting the problem by the counselee in obeying the biblical standard, third the motive is to benefit the one being counseled.
- d. Some times extreme measure are necessary, as Paul told Timothy, "Some rebuke before all, that others also may fear." 1Tim. 5:20
* Acts 20:31; Rom. 15:14; 1Cor. 4:14,; 10:11; Eph. 6:4; Col. 1:28, 3:16; 1Thess. 5:12, 14; 2Thess. 3:15; Tit. 3:10

This is the authorized follow up for church discipline!

Conclusion

We have seen Paul's apostolic proclamation regarding church discipline at Thessalonica, characterized by:

- I. The authority for church discipline!
- II. The authorized action for church discipline!

III. The authorized follow up for church discipline!