

“How to Confront a Sinful Brother”

2 Thessalonians 3:13-15

Theme: The church is to be lovingly intolerant of sinful saints.

Introduction:

I. THE STANDARD FOR THE CONDUCT - 3:13

A. The Potential for Discouragement

1. Paul provides a contrast to the lazy and slothful brothers he had rebuked in the previous section - *“But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.”*
2. It is a common temptation - when we see others failing to “carry their weight,” to think “Why should I keep exerting if no one else is trying?”
3. *“grow weary”* [ἐγκακέω] - to lose motivation in continuing a desirable pattern of conduct or activity; it has to do with enthusiasm.

B. The Preservation of Devotion

1. *“well-doing”* [καλοποιέω] - refers to doing what ought to be done - to fulfill the obligation to care for those who truly have need
2. Men were to be engaged in working in order to support the family; women were to be “workers at home” providing a place of warmth and safety for the family; and children were to be subject to their parents with honor.
3. The calamitous disruption of society is devastating when people begin to thwart God’s purposes and become unaccountable for their obedience to His commands.

II. THE SEGREGATION FROM THE CONTRARY - 3:14

A. The Identification of Disobedience

1. As a result, when people become belligerent in their disobedience to the commands of Christ, action is required.
2. Since Paul had directly exhorted the disorderly among the saints at Thessalonica multiple times, he declares that thing must be elevated to a next step in treating the disorderly - *“If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him ...”* - **1 Thessalonians 4:11, 5:14**; and here.

3. Belligerence in sin cannot be viewed lightly by a congregation - two responses are mandated here:
 - a) *“take special note of that person”* - conveys the idea of a churchwide identification or public censure - cp. **Matthew 18:15-17a**.
 - b) *“do not associate with him”* - conveys the idea of the church collectively withdrawing from any fellowship with the brother - cp. **1 Corinthians 5:9-11**.
4. This seems to be all part of the “tell it to the church” stage of the Matthew 18 discipline process.
5. Formal excommunication would follow this at some point if he does not respond to the discipline being provided him.

B. The Isolation of the Disobedient

1. We live in a time when everyone’s feelings are to be considered sacred - that if we don’t affirm someone, we have illegitimated them personally.
2. Nevertheless, the Bible declares that the intention of the church’s treatment of someone obstinately disobedient is to seek to bring shame upon them - *“... so that he will be put to shame.”*
3. *“shame”* [ἐντρέπω] - lit. it means “to turn inward” in order to have guilt intensified.
4. To recognize that one does not belong with the rest of the people who claim Christ but is an outsider is designed to turn the sinner from the error of their ways and bring them to repentance.
5. This is something that is to be done churchwide and not an individual proclaiming judgment upon someone who has offended them.
6. The goal of this is the reconciliation of the sinner with the Lord and the Body of the Lord - the church.

III. THE SPIRIT OF THE CORRECTION - 3:15

A. The Attitude toward the Disobedient

1. It is easy for believers to become disappointed, then frustrated, and finally resentful of other believers because of the belligerence in sin.
2. Therefore, Paul exhorts us: *“Yet do not regard him as an enemy ...”*
3. This shows that no feelings of hostility toward the disobedient is to be justified or rationalized.

4. **“regard”** [ἡγέομαι] - conveys a decision - coming from a word meaning to “engage in an intellectual process,” or “to reckon.”
5. **“enemy”** [ἐχθρός] - literally “hated one” or someone “hostile.”
6. Clearly, Paul’s intention is to emphasize the objective realities of how we are to think should prevail over the subjective impulses of how we are likely to feel about such a person.

B. **The Admonition of the Disobedient**

1. Since the disobedient one has not been put out of the fellowship through the step of excommunication and turning them over to Satan, the congregation is to continue to **“admonish him as a brother.”**
2. Given that the congregation was not to have any fellowship with him, this exhortation to **“admonish him”** conveys the confrontation over his sin.
3. **“admonish”** [νουθετέω] - means to *“counsel about avoidance or the cessation of an improper course of conduct”* and is the word for biblical counseling.
4. This is the very spirit that Paul instructs Timothy to possess when interacting with someone who is in opposition to the truth - **2 Timothy 2:24-26**.

A church is to be lovingly intolerant of sinful saints.