

Series: **Confident Hope**
Today's Title: **"Obedience & Shame"**

August 14, 2022 – 2 *Thessalonians* 3:13-18 – Sermon 28 of 28

Objective: To help Christians know how important their obedience to God's Word is for them and the church.

TKU to Dr. Steve Ingino & Mike Fister for filling the pulpit for the past 2 Sundays.

I was able to get some good work done on my dissertation – starting to see the ‘light at the end of the tunnel’.

The 2nd week I was gone Kim and I went to Texas to spend about 5 days with our son Brian and his wife, Gianna – and our in-laws Joe and Tracy.

We had a great time relaxing and having a good time at their home on Lake Travis – just outside of Austin.

Good food – hanging out at the pool – ping pong matches – cruising in the boat – tubing and learning to wake surf – riding the jet skis.

The 6 of us had a wonderful time – first time Kim and I were able to spend a significant time with Joe & Tracy – and it was restful and enjoyable.

Next Sunday I will begin a new sermon series – **“God is...So What?”** - Most people see theology – the study of God - as an intellectual pursuit. But I believe God wants us to know Him in both our head and heart. In **“God is...So What?”** we will

take 16 Sundays to study the attributes or perfections of God and why they matter.

I hope this series will help each of us increase our knowledge of God - and I hope our knowledge of God will affect how we view life, how view ourselves, how we interact with others, and how we live our life each day.

“**God is...So What?**” will begin next Sunday – and it will take us into December.

Opening Prayer

Turn to 2 Thessalonians 3:13-18 – p. 990

We began this series on January 16, 2022 – and have spent 28 Sundays walking verse-by-verse through Paul’s 1st and 2nd letter to the believers in Thessalonica.

Paul wrote these letters in the early part of his ministry.

The church in Thessalonica was a good church.

The Apostle has no broad correction or admonishment for them, although he does give some strong correction to some members of the community there, as Mike covered last week and the issue of idle or busy-body people.

Today we will look at the closing section of **2 Thessalonians**, but Paul uses the last few verses to cover some substantial topics.

Follow along as I read the first section of our passage today.

Read vs. 13-15

The drain of doing good. vs. 13

Diet. Exercise.

It's tiring to keep on track. To watch what you eat – how much you eat – to get up and go for a run – to go to the gym.

There are many times I want to pull up to the drive thru and order a double cheeseburger and large French fries – and a chocolate shake.

There are mornings I want to stay in bed – and sleep a bit longer. I don't want to get up – I don't want to go on a run – I just want to relax in bed – or go make a tasty breakfast and relax.

I think many of us would agree that we get a bit tired of the self-discipline and self-denial required by a life of diet and exercise.

But do we realize that habits of spiritual health are just as tiring? That the battle against our flesh – our selfishness – to do what is good and right – can be just as tiring?

“As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.”

We can easily get tired of the Christian call to self-discipline and self-denial.

In context we could say Paul's admonition here is for them to not grow weary in doing good to those who

were idle – those who were not working – those who were disorderly.

We understand this because when we see patterns of laziness or a disordered life that needs constant rescue from the brink of disaster - we can lose patience – which leads to a loss of charity or grace – and we might get tired or drained of doing good for others.

It's helpful for us to realize – or admit – that doing what is good and right can be a drain. We can easily get worn out or “...weary in doing good”.

This is why it's so important not to try and live our Christian life on our own – in an isolated or independent way. We need each other – we need other Christians in our life to help us, to encourage us, to bolster us up when we're feeling drained.

Shame that leads to repentance. vs. 14-15

This is a tough verse for our culture.

Paul is at the end of his letter – in the closing sentences, but he's going out with a bang!

He's not taking his foot off the gas in any way.

He increases his firmness – his resolve for the Thessalonians to live in community that is moving toward holiness.

All the followers of Christ in Thessalonica needed to be working and striving in their obedience to Paul's teaching – not just what he taught them when he was with them – but the things he wrote in his letter to them. This letter was / is the inspired words of God – so that it's more than a letter from the Apostle Paul, it's an inspired letter where the Holy Spirit led / guided Paul to write what he wrote – and the result was this letter, which was from Paul, but in actuality it was a letter from God Himself!

That's what the Bible is...God's Word to us.
His self-revelation.

Read vs. 14-15

Remember...there were no other churches or groups of believers in Thessalonica.

A person either lived in community with the other followers of Jesus – or they were on their own.

They lived in a very pagan, idol worshiping city – and it was extremely difficult to try and live a Christian life outside of the help, encouragement, and prayers of the other Christians.

So, the idea of being ignored – or not included in the larger community of believers – was a major concern and would create a major hardship.

What often happens today, is if a Christian starts living in disobedience and another believer talks with them to try and correct them and call them back to obedience, they often get upset and leave the church – and go down to the street to another church.

That wasn't an option in 1st century Thessalonica. Paul gives a command here (vs. 14 - “take note of that person”) – which means to identify them – point them out - make everyone aware of their disobedience.

They were to make everyone aware of what was going on so the community of believers would “have nothing to do with him”.

This is so counterculture to us.

But this disciplinary action had an honorable and holy motive and ethic behind it.

“...that he may be ashamed.”

This is a disappearing issue in our culture: shame.

Feeling ashamed.

Our culture is working very hard to get rid of shame.

Modern Western culture openly and aggressively accepts and affirms any and every lifestyle choice.

Even life choices which are destructive and unhealthy are accepted and affirmed.

So, the feeling or emotion of shame, in fact the very idea of shame – is becoming obsolete in America.

Shame has certainly been abused.

Shame can be used in a way to keep people down – to never let them unburden their shame...

That's a sinful abuse and misuse of shame.

But the dangerous movement in our nation – in the Western world is to erase shame from the human experience.

Shame has great value.

Shame is the proper response to sin and guilt.

Merriam Webster defines shame as: *a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety.*

(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/shame>)

“The social pressure applied is to make him keenly aware of the disapproval of the church, turn his thoughts in upon himself so that he will realize the enormity of his rebellion, and be led to repentance...

The aim is not exclusion but reformation.”

(The Thessalonian Epistles, A Call to Readiness, by D. Edmond Hiebert, p. 350)

Proverbs 27:5-6

“Better is open rebuke than hidden love.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend...”

The last point of this discipline reveals the love that is at work here.

This is not revenge, hatred, or any type of vindictive actions to hurt someone.

Paul reminds them the person who is ignoring and disobeying their teaching is one of them – one of the family of God!

vs. 15 – “Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.”

There’s a tenderness here – but a firm, almost tough love at play.

The intent is to warn them – to help them understand the direction they are moving is away from God – away from God’s blessing – and they are moving toward evil and pain and misery!

The peace and grace of God. *vs. 16-18*

There is a lot packed into this final paragraph.

Read vs. 16-18

Let’s begin by talking about peace. What is peace?

Some find peace in relationships... Financial security...

Family... Friends... Material blessings... Physical health...

Intellectual ability... alcohol... medication... entertainment escape.

These things can certainly bring a sense of peace – but human peace is fleeting – never certain – always in flux – never permanent.

Paul is not talking about our temporal peace here on earth in this life with the things of this life.

He's talking about something much more significant.

He's talking about a peace that is deeper and unmoved by life's circumstances.

Paul's taking about Peace...in and from God Himself.

Spiritual peace.

Spiritual peace is a deep-down assurance and attitude that is steady, stable, and confident in the certainty of your relationship and standing with Almighty God.

It's a calm and confident awareness that all is right – all is perfect between your soul and God.

This is a peace that is not rooted in your ability to do or say the right things.

It's not rooted in your obedience or your level of faithfulness.

Spiritual peace can only be found in the faithfulness of God.

It can only be found in the perfect obedience of Christ, whose absolute righteousness has been imputed / credited to you as a follower of Jesus.

Spiritual peace can be yours when you can rest and breathe deeply in the promises of God and when you have no doubts as to the reality of your salvation.

When you have no concerns about the absolute and total forgiveness of your sins – that God has separated your sins “as far as the east is from the west” (Psalm 103:12) – that nothing...absolutely nothing can “...separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus...” (Romans 8:39).

Spiritual peace is found in the promises of God for your soul – that He has adopted you as one of His own – that you are a fellow-heir with His Son – that He has given you new life – eternal life – with all the privileges of being in the family of God – “...you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession...” (1 Peter 2:9).

This is the peace Jesus was referring to when he told His disciples, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me.” (John 14:1).

Knowing all of these things – not just in your head – but being confident of them and resting in them in the depths of your heart.

This is Spiritual Peace.

- This is the peace Paul is talking about.
- This is the peace that is available to you.

Do you have this peace?

vs. 16 - Paul says “Now may the Lord of peace Himself...” “Himself” is emphatic in the Greek – so the emphasis for this peace is God – not you...not me.

Lit. word order: “Himself now the Lord of peace...”

It’s a peace that only comes from God – from Jesus – **not** from ourselves – **not** from someone in our life – **not** from the circumstances of life.

Turn to **John 20:19, 21, 26** – “Peace be with you”

I think Jesus wants His followers to have peace!

Do you have this peace?

Peace is not a truce of conflict.

Peace is a direct result and reality of our forgiveness of sins and standing in Christ.

Romans 5:1

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Our peace is “...with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It’s not from our behavior or our circumstances – not from our relationships or our success at work or in financial or material blessings or even because of good health.

Spiritual peace is a direct benefit and reality of our standing with God as one of His own – and the promises of God for the present and future.

Galatians 5:22-23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, **peace**...”

Colossians 3:15

“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...”

**So, we have spiritual peace...in and from God Himself.
Peace...in every moment.**

Paul wants those who follow Christ to have peace...but to have peace “at all times”.

“Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace **at all times** in every way.”

The peace of God is not fleeting – it’s not limited to the good times – the joyful times of life, but “at all times” – in every moment of life.

Peace...in all things.

“Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times **in every way.**”

In the good and the bad, those who follow Christ can have the deep, abiding, eternal peace of God.

In all that we do – in every circumstance and situation we encounter – we can have the peace of God – peace from God – in all things.

There is nothing in our life that is alienated from God’s peace.

There is no event in life in which the peace of God cannot be present.

We can often fail to rest in the peace of God when life is painful and difficult.

A few Sundays ago, Dr. Ingino spoke about worry – anxiety – and how it is a sin – because it’s an affront to God – who has told us, commanded us not to worry –

because He loves us – He is sovereign – He is with us – He has made us His own.

But we often try to navigate the difficult and painful times of life on our own – with our own coping skills – and we fail to rest in the promises and grace of God, so we miss out on the peace of God during those times.

Peace is a choice for the Christian.

Think about that.

Peace is a choice – because we must choose to trust the Lord in all of life’s moments.

Peace is a conscious decision we make – to trust in God – to trust in His goodness and kindness – to trust in His love for us even when life doesn’t feel very loving.

Be confident in God’s Word. vs. 17

If you remember, in 2:2, Paul mentioned the Thessalonian believers were led to believe a letter which was a counterfeit letter – which claimed to be from him. This counterfeit letter had caused them a great deal of anxiety and concern over the return of Christ.

So, at the end of this letter, Paul puts his own ‘signature’ on it – not by signing his name, but by writing the last sentence or 2 in his own handwriting.

Read vs. 17

Today, we confirm authorship or someone's identity by their signature.

In the Roman / Greek 1st century culture, they didn't confirm authorship by a person's signature, but by their handwriting style as they would write the last sentence or 2 of the correspondence.

Why is this important for us today?

Because it reveals how important it is for us to be confident in God's Word.

It's important for us to recognize what is inspired Scripture – and what is not.

The Book of Mormon – is not.

The Quran – is not.

The Doctrine & Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price – is not.

The writings of Charles Taze Russell and the Watch Tower Society – are not.

The 66 books of our Bible – 39 O.T. and 27 N.T.

These are the divinely inspired Scriptures.

We need to be confident that what we're reading is truly God's Word – and not be fooled by false claims of inspiration.

The key to peace: God's grace. vs. 18

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

Simple...yet profound and essential.

Paul's last word – his last thought is... Grace.
It's easy to focus on other things that are important.
It's important to have a biblical understanding of the return of Christ.
It's important to have a biblical understanding of work.
It's important to know about God's future judgment.
We could make a very long list here.
But the most important thing for us – is to know about God's grace.
Without His grace – nothing else matters.
Without His grace – we have no future.
Without His grace – we have no forgiveness.
Without His grace – we could only know God's judgment and wrath against our sin.
Without His grace – we would have no chance – no possibility of a relationship with the holy God.
"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."
Paul's closing sentence is that all of the Thessalonian believers would have and experience God's grace through His Son, our "Lord Jesus Christ".
Have you experienced His grace?
Have you been forgiven of your sins and received the eternal life of God – because of His grace?

Apply it...

Join a small group...

to avoid isolation and gain help and encouragement for doing good.

Shame is a sign you are away from God.

Don't fight against shame.

Understand your shame and admit your sin and repent – change your attitude or action to God-honoring things.

Live in the peace of God.

Learn to live each day in light of God's love and forgiveness for you – His eternal promises to you – and you will begin living in His peace.

Receive God's grace for your life.

Have you received His grace?

Have you been forgiven of your sins?

Admit your sins to God.

Believe in Jesus as your Savior.

Commit to live in His love, forgiveness, and His peace.

Closing prayer