

ORDER IN THE CHAOS

2 Thessalonians 3:6–18



EVERY

Member | Event | Time

NEW MERCIES CHRISTIAN CHURCH | JOHN 4: 28-30

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 205–208.

2 Thessalonians 3:6–18 (NKJV)

6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you;

8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,

9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

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

12 Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

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

14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.

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

16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.

17 The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.

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

- When problems are not solved, they grow and become worse. A sliver left in the finger can become infected and cause a toxic condition so serious that surgery may become necessary.
- If you tell your doctor that you stepped on a rusty nail, he will immediately give you a tetanus shot, even though the wound may appear insignificant to you.
- Church problems are like physical problems: if left unsolved, they grow and become worse, and they infect more people.

- The local church is a body; and what germs are to the physical body, sin is to the spiritual body. When Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonian church, he warned the idle busybodies to get to work (*1 Thes. 4:11*).

1 Thessalonians 4:11 (NKJV)

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,

- He admonished the church leaders to “warn them that are unruly” (1 Thes. 5:14). The word *unruly* means “a soldier out of rank.” Apparently these troublemakers did not repent, because Paul devoted the rest of his second letter to this problem.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NKJV)

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

- What was the problem? Some members of the assembly had misinterpreted Paul's teachings about the return of Christ, left their jobs, and were living off the generosity of the church.
- They were idle while others were working.
- Yet they expected the church to support them.
- It is possible that this group of lazy saints was the source of the false teaching Paul mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:2.

- They were also spreading gossip about people in the church. They had time on their hands and gossip on their lips, but they defended themselves by arguing, “The Lord is coming soon!”
- **Misinterpretations and misapplications of the truths of God’s Word can cause endless trouble.**

- Paul expected the whole church to work together in solving this problem.
- The church in love must deal with its own members and seek to help each one obey God.
- To assist them in this task, Paul gave four motives to encourage the careless believers to turn from their sins and start earning their own bread.

The Exhortation of the Word

2 Thes. 3:6

2 Thessalonians 3:6 (NKJV)

But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

- Paul had used this powerful word *command* in his first Thessalonian letter (*1 Thes. 4:2, 11*); and we met it earlier in this chapter (*2 Thes. 3:4*).
- He used it again in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, 12. The word means “a military order handed down from a superior officer.” Paul considered the church to be like an army; and if the army does not obey the orders, there can be no order.

Unfortunately, some of the saints were “Out Of Rank”.

(“unruly” in 1 Thes. 5:14, and “disorderly” in 2 Thes. 3:6–7 and 11)

1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NKJV)

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

2 Thessalonians 3:6–7 (NKJV)

6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you;

2 Thessalonians 3:11 (NKJV)

For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.

What authority did Paul have
to issue this command,
“If any is not willing
to work, neither
should he eat”?

- *(2 Thes. 3:10, literal translation)* He had the authority of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. At least twenty times in the Thessalonian letters, Paul used this complete title of the Saviour.
- Jesus means “Saviour” and is His human name *(Matt. 1:21)*.
- Christ is His divine title; it means “Messiah—the Anointed One.” Other persons could use the name Jesus *(the Hebrew form is “Joshua”)*; and other persons could claim to be anointed, such as prophets, priests, and kings.
- He had the authority of God to say this to them!

- **What does the Bible teach about manual (or mental) labor?**
- For one thing, labor was a part of man's life *before* sin entered the scene.
- God gave Adam the job of dressing and guarding the Garden (*Gen. 2:15*).
- Though sin turned labor into almost hopeless toil (*Gen. 3:17–19*), it must never be thought that the necessity for work is a result of sin.
- Man needs work for the fulfillment of his own person. God created him to work.

- Have you noticed that God called people who were busy at work? Moses was caring for sheep (*Ex. 3*).
- Joshua was Moses' servant before he became Moses' successor (*Ex. 33:11*).
- Gideon was threshing wheat when God called him (*Jud. 6:11ff*),.
- David was caring for his father's sheep (*1 Sam. 16:11ff*).

- Our Lord called four fishermen to serve as His disciples, and He Himself had worked as a carpenter.
- Paul was a tentmaker (*Acts 18:1–3*) and used his trade to support his own ministry.

- The Jews honored honest labor and required all their rabbis to have a trade.
- The Greeks despised manual labor and left it to their slaves.
- This Greek influence, plus their wrong ideas about the doctrine of the Lord's return, led these believers into an unchristian way of life.

- Paul recognized the fact that some people could not work, perhaps because of physical handicaps or family responsibilities.
- This is why he phrased the statement as he did: “If any man is not willing to work.” It was not a question of ability but willingness.

When a believer cannot work and is in need, it is the privilege and duty of the church to help him.

James 2:14–17 (NKJV)

14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

1 John 3:16–18 (NKJV)

16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

- The exhortation of the Word should have motivated these lazy believers to work; but Paul added a second motivation.

The Example of the Apostle

2 Thes. 3:7–10

2 Thessalonians 3:7–10 (NKJV)

7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you;

8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,

9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

As an apostle, Paul had the right to expect financial support; but he deliberately gave up this right that he might be an example to the young believers.

1 Corinthians 9:6–14 (NKJV)

6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?

7 Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?

8 Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also?

9 For it is written in the law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.” Is it oxen God is concerned about?

10 Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.

11 If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?

12 If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.

13 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?

14 Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

- In this attitude, Paul proved himself to be a mature Christian leader.
- Selfish leaders use people to build up their support, and they are always claiming their rights.

- **A truly dedicated leader will use his rights to build up the people, and will lay aside his rights and privileges for the sake of others.**
- He had referred to his example in labor in his previous letter.

1 Thessalonians 2:9 (NKJV)

For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

- His readers knew that Paul and his associates had not taken any support from the infant church.
- Instead, they had set the example of meeting their own needs and also helping to meet the needs of others. “You ought to imitate us,” he admonished his readers.
- The greatest influence is that of godly living and sacrifice.
- A Christian leader may appeal to the authority of the Word; but if he cannot point also to his own example of obedience, his people will not listen.

- This is the difference between *authority* and *stature*. A leader earns stature as he obeys the Word and serves His people in the will of God.
- Authority comes from position; stature comes from practice and example. Stature earns the leader the right to exercise authority.
- Every Christian worker has the right to have support from the church as he serves the Lord.

Luke 10:7 (NKJV)

And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.

Galatians 6:6 (NKJV)

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

1 Timothy 5:17–18 (NKJV)

17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

18 For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

- We must not use Paul's example as an excuse not to support God's servants.
- Any servant of God has the privilege of setting aside that right to the glory of God. Paul did this so that he might be an example to the young believers in Thessalonica.
- Paul's policy not only encouraged the new believers but also silenced the accusers.
- In every city there were nomadic teachers who "peddled their wares" for what they could earn.

- Paul did not want to be classified with them.
- Nor did he want any unsaved person to say, “Paul preaches only to make money.”
- As he stated in 1 Corinthians 9, Paul wanted to make the Gospel “free of charge”; he would not permit money to hinder the winning of lost souls.
- Needless to say, the careless attitude of these believers was affecting the church; so Paul added yet a third motive for their obedience.

The Encouragement of the Church

2 Thes. 3:11–15

2 Thessalonians 3:11–15 (NKJV)

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12 Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

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

The Encouragement of the Church

2 Thes. 3:11–15

14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.
15 Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

The Enablement of the Lord

2 Thes. 3:16–18

2 Thessalonians 3:16–18 (NKJV)

16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.

17 The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.

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