

II Thessalonians 3:6-15 Part 3

Verses 10-15 ~ Division and Separation are the Testimonies of the Believer

Today we are taking II Thessalonians chapter 3, verses 6 through 15, part three. Hopefully we will finish this up today and start the last section next week. We are in chapter 3, which is the instructions concerning their testimony. That is the testimony and the conduct of the believers there in Thessalonica.

The first command is in verses 1 through 5, **Be praying concerning us.** So Paul wanted prayer for the successful ministry of the Word and deliverance from those who have twisted minds and are evil men.

We saw the second command in verses 6 through 15 that we started a couple of weeks ago. **Now we command you, brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for you to withdraw from every brother walking disorderly and not according to the tradition which you received from us.** So the command is to avoid and withdraw.

Today we are going to take a very important principle and concept truth found in the New Testament. Basically today's message is centered around, we see in scripture that division and separation are the testimonies of the believer, not from out of legalism, but from out of love. So separation and division is the testimony of the believer. That is how the Spirit effectively ministers and touches people's lives.

We saw last week in verse 7, **For you yourselves know how it is necessary to imitate us.** And how the word *imitate* is where we get the word *mimic* or *mime* from, and it means *expression*. So, **You yourselves know how it is necessary to have the same expression in your life as we do; because we have Christ.** So Paul was established and appointed to the position to be the example to the believers as to how Christ is to be expressed.

It does not mean to copy. That is something that is very important. He is not saying *copy me*, he is saying *mimic me*. So how do I know what the expression of Christ looks like? Well, Paul is the example. How do I know what to believe? Well, Paul is the example.

The traditional teaching of Paul, and as we saw in Galatians chapter 1 verses 8 and 9 that Paul says, **If we or an angel from heaven or anybody preaches any other gospel to you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed.** So that is pretty limiting, yet that is very secure to know that Paul's gospel was the gospel of Jesus Christ and anything outside of that is not. He says the reason why it is necessary to imitate us is **because we were not disorderly among you.** In other words Paul says, "We lived orderly before the Lord." The word *orderly* is the word *submission*. *Disorderly* is to be in *lack of submission*, lack of lining up with what is right in the Lord and His word.

He says in verse 8, **Nor did we eat freely bread from anyone, but in labor and toil, working night and day for not to burden any of you.** And so he did not want to burden them. Even though he had the authority to be supported by them, he did not want to burden them so he

went and worked night and day in order to lighten the burden, lighten the load that they are under, and to be an example to them.

Notice verse 9, **Not that we do not have authority, but in order that we might ourselves be given as a pattern (or example) to you for you to imitate us.** See the expression of Christ in us? Let that same expression be in your life. That is how you know it is the Lord or not is whether that same expression was in Paul's life.

For today starting at verse 10. He says in verse 10, **For even when we were with you, this we were commanding you, that if anyone does not desire to work, neither let him eat.** So now the application of these principles and truths are applied to a certain specific problem there in Thessalonica and that is that some had stopped working. Under the pretense that the Lord is coming back they stop working. Notice how it is literally translated. **If anyone does not desire, or does not wish, to work.** It does not mean to be out of work. It means to not desire to work and to bypass work when it comes your way. **Neither should he eat.** That is supposed to solve the problem, that he should not eat if he does not work. It sounds a little harsh to see someone starving just because they refuse to work. It really plays on the humanitarian heartstrings.

It is interesting, several years ago when I was in a church in Los Angeles they had a man in the church who could not pay his rent. So he asked the church to help him out to pay his rent. And the leaders got together prayed about it, and yes, we are here to help, so they helped him by giving him his rent money. Well the next month came around - and this man had a job, he had a full-time job. The next month came around and he says, "I do not have my rent money again." And so the leaders gathered together and asked him, "Why do not have your rent money?" And then he revealed to them that he has a gambling problem. And so he gambles his money away and at the end the month he does not have enough rent for the following month. So the leaders decided to pray about it, and discuss it, and came to a decision that they were not going to give him his rent money. That he needs to seek help for the problem. Even to the point they were willing to let him live in his car if he had to, in order to seek the help, seek the repentance, and seek the healing that he needed. So sometimes it hurts, and sometimes love is tough, God's love. It does not solve the problem to keep giving him his rent money. The problem has to be confronted.

First of all, let me say this, in I Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 14 Paul encouraged the church in that first letter saying, **Now we encourage you, brothers, warn the disorderly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.** So obviously when Timothy came back he said that there are still people in the church who refused to go to work, for whatever reason. **If a person desires not to work then let him not eat.**

There is a reason for this, a reason for why Paul would say, **Let him not eat if he does not work.** Verse 11 tells us, **For we hear some walking among you disorderly - that is, not walking in order - not working at all, but being busybodies.** It is kind of interesting in the Greek text - the English does not bring it out, but you see the term *working* in this verse? We translated it *not working at all*. The word *busybody* is the word *overworking*. And so it is a play on words that basically says they do not want to perform physical labor, but they want to work

hard in meddling in other people's lives. They do not want to do physical work, but they want to meddle with other people. They are busybodies, overworking, in the human fleshy realm.

Verse 12, **Now we command to such ones, and we encourage through our Lord Jesus Christ, in order that working with quietness**, this is how it is literally translated. It is translated, **working with quietness they might eat their own bread**. The word *working* is a participle, and it means *to continue to work with quietness*. Take your proper place. Get in order. Stop being disorderly and with quietness eat your own bread.

Verse 13, **But you yourselves, brothers, should not faint while doing well**. So it is very wearisome. The word *faint* means *faint of heart, ready to give out*. Paul said in Galatians chapter 6 verse 9, **And let us not grow weary while doing good: for in due season we will reap, if we do not lose heart**. So hang in there. There will be times of discouragement. There will be times in the church when you have got to deal with such matters, and it is very wearying, and it really wears people out to have to deal with disorderly people. And it is very trying and painful for the church. **You who are doing good**, he says, has to do with being obedient to God's word. **Do not grow weary**, do not become weary in doing of the good.

And then notice verse 14, which is our focus for the day. Verse 14, **But if anyone does not obey our word**. So they hear this, they hear Paul's command through his letter, **If you do not work, you do not eat. But if anyone does not obey our word through this letter**, notice it is Paul's word. He says, **Mark this one, and do not associate with him**. The word *associate* means *socially associate* or *mix with*. He goes on to say, **In order that he may be ashamed**. So it is to bring shame to a person's life, to bring them to repentance. So the whole purpose is not to punish somebody, the whole purpose for this, in withdrawing yourself from such a person and not to socially associate with them, is to make them be ashamed. Paul is saying basically it is necessary for this brother who is disorderly to be ashamed of the way he is living disorderly by refusing to work. And that applies to everyone who is disorderly in relation to God's word.

So we see in Scripture, here is the thought for the day, we see in Scripture that division and separation are the testimonies of the believer. Not from out of legalism but from out of love.

The basis for this principle is found in the Lord's teaching in Matthew chapter 10 verses 34 through 39. Jesus said in verse 34 Matthew 10, **You should not suppose that I came to bring peace upon the earth**. Everybody is calling for peace and love. Jesus said, **Do not suppose that I came to bring peace upon the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword**. (verse 35) **For I came to divide a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; (verse 36) and the enemies of the person will be the ones of his own household**. (verse 37) **The one loving father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me**. That is a participle of **φιλέω** (*phileō*), "If you have an affection, a family-friendly affection for mother or father above Me," Jesus said, "he is not worthy of Me."

And the one loving son or daughter above Me is not worthy of Me. That is why I have said over the years, and will continue to say, we have three children who are not actively following the Lord and studying His word. I will not allow my children to hold me hostage. If

they refuse to follow the Lord, then I cannot go along with it. I cannot let them hold me hostage. (verse 38) **And he who does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me,** Jesus said. (verse 39) **The one having found his life will lose it.** *Having found* indicates preservation. **The one who has preserved his life will lose it, and the one having lost his life on account of Me will find it.**

The Scripture goes on to talk about the separation between believers and nonbelievers in II Corinthians chapter 6 verses 14 through 18. Paul says, **Do not become unequally yoked with unbelievers.** The *yoke* is that harness, that wooden beam connecting the two oxen together. **For what participation has righteousness with lawlessness?** There is not any, unless you compromise. **And what fellowship has light with darkness?** (verse 15) **And what agreement has Christ with Belial?** *Belial* being another name for the devil. So he says, **What agreement has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?** Spiritually, what part is there between the two? There is not any, totally different spirits, totally different influence.

(verse 16) **And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God; according as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they themselves will be My people.** (verse 17) **On account of which, because of this, come out from their midst and be separate.** There is the testimony of the believer. **Come out and be separate.** There is no fellowship there. You are compromising your walk with Christ and your effectiveness to people's lives by your compromise. **So come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord, do touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.** (verse 18) **I will be a Father to you, and you yourselves will be to me for sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.**

Paul even addressed the divisions in the church in I Corinthians chapter 11 verses 17 through 19. Paul says, **Now while commanding you I do not praise you.** So he is really correcting this church in Corinth. So, **I am giving you commands but I am not giving you praise because you come together not for the better, but for the worse.** Do you know you can actually get together for church and Christian Fellowship and leave worse off than when you went in? Paul says, **You gather together not for the better but for the worse. For first, indeed when you come together in the assembly, I hear that there be divisions among you; and partly I believe it.** The word *division* is the word *schism*. There are schisms, tears, rips among you.

And partly I believe it. For it is necessary also to be factions among you, in order that the ones approved might become manifest among you. So he is saying it is necessary for there to be factions. The word for *factions* is the Greek word **αἵρεσις** (*haireisis*), where we get our word *heresy* from. It is necessary for heresies to be amongst you so the ones approved might become manifest among you. Compare it to Paul's teachings, compare it to Paul's gospel, you find out who is following the truth of the word and who is not following the truth of the word. It is manifest. It is made evident by God in the midst of divisions and factions in the church. There is a reason for it.

Now John in his version of this, is found in I John chapter 2 verse 19 that we have taken many times. He says, **They went out from us, but they were not from us; for if they were from us, they would have remained with us: but they went out, in order that they might be made manifest that all are not from us.** So they actually left and went and followed a different doctrine, a different gospel. And Paul says that is God's way of manifesting who is of the Lord who is not; who is of Paul and his assembly of believers and who is not, by how they line up and how they went out.

Then Paul dealt with a particular sin in Corinth which is dealt with in I Corinthians chapter 5 verses 1 through 7. He says, **It is actually being reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality which is not even being named among the Gentiles.** So even nonbelievers do not name this is an activity of theirs, it is a very shameful act. **So as someone is to have the wife of his father.** So a person is either sleeping with his mother or sleeping with his stepmother. And Paul says, **Such sexual immorality which is not even being named among the Gentiles.** Verse 2 of I Corinthians 5, **And you yourselves are puffed up.** They were all excited about the gifts of the Spirit. They were all very fleshy, very carnal. But this terrible sin in their midst they did not do anything about. **And did not rather mourn, in order that the one who has done this deed might be removed from out of your midst.** (verse 3) **For I indeed, as being absent in body, but present in the spirit, have already judged, as being present, the one who has in this way done this deed.** (verse 4) **In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you have gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,** verse 5, **to deliver such a one unto Satan** - now this supposedly is a brother. He does not say it but he is in the assembly - **deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh** - not for the destruction of his life, but for his flesh - **in order that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.** So this discipline, this separation, this sending him away out of the fellowship is to bring him to repentance and restoration.

In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians he had to encourage them to take him back now that he is repented. They wanted to punish him more for his sin. And Paul says, no, that the discipline was for restoration, not for punishment.

He says in verse 6 of I Corinthians chapter 5. **Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, in order that you might be a new lump, according as you are unleavened.** You are already unleavened. But now you have this leaven in your lump of dough, and you need to remove it to stay unleavened. **For also Christ our Passover was sacrificed on behalf of us.** Separation and division are the testimonies in the church and outside of the church with the world. Separation and division from the world, from nonbelievers. Divisions that God makes within the church. The reason for the divisions and separations, some for disciplinary reasons and others by the decree of God for fellowship purposes.

So then in our text in II Thessalonians chapter 3 verse 14 that we are in, Paul dealt with the situation in Thessalonica. As in I Corinthians chapter 5 verse 5 where the brother was delivered over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so here a brother is to be shamed so that he will repent.

But it says in verse 15, notice the last verse of this section **And do not count him as an enemy.** The word *count* is where we get our word *governor* from. In other words, let not this govern your thinking and your actions toward him that you consider him to be an enemy. He is not an enemy, he is a brother. **But warn him (or admonish him) as a brother.** And so basically he is saying that there is a family love towards the brotherhood. God has set up people, called people, appointed them that those who are disorderly are to be dealt with because it cannot be in the church that way. And it is not our command or the church's command or traditional religious command that has been handed down from denomination to denomination through the years, it is a command from God's word. This is how the Lord wants His church to function.

So in summary, so far in these first 15 verses they are commanded to pray for Paul, for the free run of God's word, that he might be delivered from twisted and evil men. And secondly, he commanded them to withdraw from those who are disorderly, who refuse to work, who have no desire to work. Paul said, "We left you an example." He says, "We are the example." And if anybody is not in obedience to his word and to his letter scope out that person, notice that person, and do not socially associate with them. Not as an enemy but as a brother, so that your actions will be to shame them in order bring them to repentance and back into order in the body of Christ.

As we mentioned the theme of this section, the testimony of the believer is separation and division, not compromise. Not out of legalism but out of love, because you care about the person. You want to see them come to repentance. You do not want to see them punished. And so we have in the body of Christ today love movement where we love one another, and we compromise, and we tolerate false doctrine, we tolerate an evil lifestyle. All of this in the name of love, but that is not love.

You hear over the years that there are certain Scriptures that people use. For instance, when a division comes between mother and daughter, and son and father, and daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law - when that happens people say well the Scripture says, "**Honor your mother and father,**" so it is not right to separate from them, or divide from them, or talk about or live a lifestyle that brings separation. The greatest honor that you can share with any mother or any father, the greatest honor you can show them is to surrender to Christ. They might not like it. They might rebel against it. They are rebelling against the highest act and highest attainment one can have in one's life, which is to know Jesus Christ and to belong to Him and to surrender to Him.

Another excuse or reason that a person gives for not separating and not dividing, letting division take place naturally, spiritually, is that when Jesus sat with nonbelievers He ate dinner with them. He sat with sinners, He did not sin with sinners. There is a difference. There is a difference between sitting there and representing Christ, and sitting there and sinning with them in compromise to one's faith and relationship to Christ.

Next week we enter the last section, verses 16 through 18, and then, Lord willing, we will finish this book. And the next book we are going to take, like I said, Lord willing, is the Gospel

of Mark. We will go through another gospel, a short gospel. But get back into a gospel again, and the ministry and life of Christ.

Let's close with prayer.