

2 Thessalonians 3:6-18

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[0:00] Take your Bibles and go with me to the book of 2 Thessalonians. We're going to finish 2 Thessalonians this morning. 2 Thessalonians chapter 3. We're going to pick up in verse 6. We're going to go all the way to the end of the book, which gets us to verse 18.

So 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verses 6 through 18. We will be finishing this short letter of Paul to the church at Thessalonica. And I know some of you will come up to me following service and say, Pastor, where are we going next?

We're done with 2 Thessalonians. And I will probably look at you and say, That's a good question. I'm still praying over that one. I'm not 100% certain where we will be trusting the Lord's leading there.

But we will be finishing it up this morning. Now we're getting to the admonition here. We're getting to the rebuke and the correction. Paul is writing this letter to the church at Thessalonica, a church that he did not have very long to be presently physically with because of the persecution that began to arise immediately after its forming, after its planting.

And Paul was forced to leave, but he left behind a group of believers, young believers, that began to flourish. We see that in 1 Thessalonians. And we see that the faith there began to spread.

[1:07] How do we know faith is flourishing? How do we know that you're growing spiritually? It's when other people begin hearing not about you, but about your Savior. So the name of Christ began to resonate from within this church to the regions around it.

And then Paul is just encouraging that letter, encouraging that church through that letter. And he writes a second letter here in order to encourage them and to guard them against false teaching, false doctrine. But there's one matter he wants to correct.

We'll get to it here in the end of the book. He saves it to the end and kind of ends with a punch. But we'll get to the matter he wants to correct. And it's a matter that is really how we should live until Christ comes again.

So if you want a title, it's Until Christ Comes Again. Every chapter in 1 and 2 Thessalonians has a reference to the second coming of Christ, each and every one of them.

Those two letters are probably two of the earliest letters, if not the earliest. We believe there's one who may be just a little bit earlier than 1 Thessalonians. So some of the earliest writings of Paul, he is writing to the church, encouraging them how then they shall live in light of and even in preparation of the coming of Christ.

[2:15] And we say, well, that is just real outdated. Here we are 2,000 plus years later and he still hasn't come again. But if it was imminent at that time, it is equally as imminent at this time.

So the challenge for the city of Thessalonica and the church that is there is the same challenge that is given to us here at Ward Trace Baptist Church in the middle of small town Tennessee.

And it is how we should live until he comes again. And even the corrective measures that we should take. And we will see that today in the Word of God in 2 Thessalonians.

If you are physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together and we read with one another the Word of God found in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, picking up in verse 6. And then we'll read to the end of the book and we will pray. Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.

[3:15] For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you so

that you would follow our example.

For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order. If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.

Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.

If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Now may the Lord of peace himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance, the Lord be with you all. I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter.

[4:31] This is the way I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for this glorious opportunity to come and to look with one another at the word of God.

We pray that as we have seen it and heard it and we read it, Lord, that you would give us minds to understand, hearts to receive, and lives to live it out for your glory.

Be with us now. I pray that every hindrance and every distraction may be removed, that we would be focused on you and you alone, and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

Paul has written to the church and encouraged them in their faith. He has written to the church and he has challenged them to stand against false teaching and false doctrine.

He has warned them of the enemy's active work of creeping into the body. And he said this is not a new tactic. He had said that throughout the second chapter, how it is really the desire of the enemy from the very beginning, and it continues until that day and even until this day.

[5:39] He has called the church to stand guard from the attacks without. And now he ends his letter with the calling of taking care of the matters within, of how we should live as believers until he comes again.

He is challenging the church, how they should respond to the life of one another. He is challenging the body, how they should build up and grow up one another.

He is calling them to the standard that Christ has indeed put upon them. We read this and there are a number of things that questions pop to our mind immediately.

Some seem to be in direct contradiction to other teachings of Paul. We'll get to that in just a moment. Some seem to be a little bit of, we want to push back from, we are ashamed and even offended by what it says to us, but yet we will understand hopefully the reasoning of it.

The reality that Christ is coming back again is a theme that resonates throughout Scripture. It is a theme that speaks to not only his power, but our responsibilities.

[6:50] And it is something that should be ever present before us, because it is the motivating force for how we should live until he dies. Either until he calls us home through death, or until he returns again and calls us to meet him in the air.

But in light of that, how do we live until Christ comes again? How do we live in light of the reality we will stand before our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ? Not only how should we stand guard against the attacks, but how should we stand guard against our own desires and our own longings, and just to be quite frank, our own laziness?

How do we continue to have this self-motivation to live in the day in and the day out for the glory of Jesus Christ? Paul alludes to it here.

But before he begins to bring this challenge or this rebuke, he introduces this reality that we must assume. He says, finally, brethren. Now, first of all and foremost, I want you to understand.

He repeats that refrain in verse 1 of the third chapter, and then again in verse 6. Now, we command you, brethren, understand that this is a church doctrine.

[8:05] This is a church teaching. This is not for the non-believer or the unbeliever. This is for the brethren, their brothers and sisters. These are for those who name the name of Jesus Christ.

Paul is not here putting a blanket accusation or judgment upon the world. Paul says elsewhere, what do I have to do with judging the outsider?

For they have one who judges them, and it's not me. But rather, I do judge as much as I would judge myself, my brother and my sister. We are distinguishing fruit.

Now, that is not a bad judgment, because the judgment there is not a judgment unto condemnation. So understand this, friend. Listen, if a brother comes to me, and I've had this happen before many times, and says, hey, brother, I believe you're wrong in there, and it seems as if they're passing judgment upon me.

It is not an unbiblical, ungodly judgment. Why? Because they are not judging me unto condemnation. They are calling me unto holiness.

[9:10] That's a big difference. When we cast judgment upon the outsider, and we are declaring they are wrong, they are without Christ, and therefore we are standing in the place of their eternal judge, and condemning them to an everlasting separation from Jesus Christ.

For the believer, for there is no condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ. Who can bring a charge against God's elect? Friend, if I come to you and say, well, brother or sister, there's this issue in your life.

I am not condemning you eternally, for I do not have the authority nor the power to do that. I may be challenging you in the temporal, but it is not an eternal condemnation.

So let's settle that matter. That when Paul speaks here, he is not casting one out of the kingdom. I mean, this is Paul, who wrote 1 Corinthians, speaks of handing an individual over to Satan, and he says he's handing him over to Satan, remember the rest of that verse, for the destruction of his flesh, and the preservation of his soul.

He says, I'm going to hand him over so much that he may even die. Why? Because my aim is not this world.

[10:33] And this is a believer in Jesus Christ. And the eternal destination of his soul is what I have in mind. And you say, whoa, pastor, that is so harsh.

Well, is it? Because look at what it says. Notice the purity of the name we bear. He says, now I command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We tend to skip over those taglines. But this is what bears the weight of everything that follows.

Paul does not say, now I command you, brethren, based on who I am.

I command you, brethren, based upon the apostolate position that I hold. I command you, brethren, because I was blind on the road to Damascus. I command you, brethren, because I was three years in the wilderness of Arabia.

I command you, brethren, because I was seated at the feet of Gamaliel, and I have the best education. I command you, brethren, because I'm a Pharisee of the Pharisees. See, no worldly position nor prominence was ever the basis of his commands nor the basis of his calling to higher standard.

[11:45] He says, I command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why? For it is the name of Christ that matters.

It is the name of Christ that the Christian bears. It is the name of Christ that we are called to reflect. And, friend, listen to me. Your salvation is for the glory and the praise of the name of Jesus Christ. He said, oh, no, no, pastor. I was saved that I may live with him eternally. No. You get to live with him eternally. But scripture says your salvation is to the glory of his name.

That's why salvation cannot be attained by your works nor your efforts nor your repetition of a prayer. Your salvation is based upon who he is. It is not based on anything you have done.

It is not based upon works lest any man should boast, Paul would say. It is not based upon any efforts nor ability nor goodness nor amount of money you put into the offering plate or the many of times you've read scripture.

[12:50] It is based upon the name of Jesus Christ. It is who he is. Whosoever shall call upon the name of Jesus Christ shall be saved, the word of God says. Why? For salvation is for the glory of his name.

And the life lived after salvation should be to the praise of his name. Why do we live in the manner in which we live? Why do we behave? Why do we love our enemies?

Why do we pray for those who persecute us? Why do we bear one another's burdens? Why do I assemble together with the saints and forsake not the assembling together? Why do I read the word of God?

Why do I give to the local church? Why am I so connected to the body? Not because it makes me feel good. Let's just be honest. We can have a confession. There are some times being connected to a body doesn't feel good.

There are some times that being a part of the body makes you feel worse. This past week, I was helping our son move. And I love the fact that our son thinks his dad is big and strong and can help him move everything heavy.

[13:57] And so we did. And it just so happened to be that day I had also worked out my legs. And so here we are carrying things up into the U-Haul and moving things we probably shouldn't be doing.

And the next morning I woke up and I had to tell your pastor's wife, I say, Honey, I think my calf muscles exploded a minute ago when I stood up because I'm so sore I can't hardly move.

And I wish that I had been a little bit separate from my body at that moment because I was not in a very comfortable position. Sometimes being a part of the body of Christ feels like that.

But why do we do it? To the praise of his name. It tells us that by this will all people know that you love me by your love for one another.

When such an unlikely group of believers can gather together and love one another, it is not to the praise of their abilities, it's to the praise of his name. And it is the purity of the name we bear, brothers and sisters, which leads to the admonition that follows in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[15:09] Read through scripture. Even the prophetic books of scripture. Why does God say he will move on behalf of Israel for the glory of my name? So that all the nations may know my name.

So that people will understand the power of my name. So that people would know the glory of my name. Not for your sakes, but for my name's sake, the Lord says. Friend, listen to me.

If you want to know the motivating factor for how you should live until Christ comes again, understand this. The life you live now in Christ is not about who you are.

It's about the glory of the name you bear. It's not about who you are. Because we die daily, Paul says.

But nevertheless, we live. It's no longer I, but Christ who lives inside of me. Galatians 2.20. And it's the name of Christ that lives inside of me. Notice the purity of the name we bear.

[16:19] So we move forward and he says, I command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that you keep away.

That you keep away from every brother that leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you have received from us. Some say, well, amen. Anybody I see doing wrong, I'm going to keep away.

So wait just a minute. Pump the brakes. Because Paul also says in Galatians 6 that you snatch those who have been caught in any trespass, delivering them from the fire.

Now how can you snatch out of the fire those you keep away from? Have you ever thought about that? Same author, same individual. Paul says, if you see any man caught in a trespass, that you snatch him out of the fire, hating even the garments defiled by the stench of the smoke.

But be careful lest you also fall. But you kept him away. That means you had to get close enough to the mess that it could have affected you so that you could pull him out. And you can't do that by keeping away.

[17:26] But here Paul says keep away from anybody living an unruly life. And you say, well, what does he mean? Well, really what he talks about is the pursuit of the heart.

There's a big difference here in what Paul is calling us to do. And it's a matter of the heart. It's the pursuit of the heart within the individual. See this word here where he says to keep away from anyone.

It means to have an ongoing repetition of life. To have a manner of life. To have an ongoing habit of living undisciplined.

That's far different than someone that has been caught in sin. For we have an enemy roaring around, prowling around, seeking whom he may devour.

Friend, listen, any one of us may be caught in any trespass at any moment. Any one of us. And we would desperately need someone to snatch us out of that.

[18:36] And we pray that nobody stays away from me when I'm in the midst of my misery and pain. But, if the focus and the intent of my heart is to knowingly, willingly live a life of undisciplined manner, then friend, you have every biblical grounds to stay away from me.

For I didn't fall into that. I'm living in it. And there's a big difference. It's a big difference.

I read somewhere this week, I think it was actually a couple weeks ago, that every believer will occasionally slip into sin. But no believer should swim in sin.

If we slip and fall, that's one thing. If we jump in the deep end and swim around in it, that's totally different. It's not the slipping that gets us in trouble.

It's the swimming. But here's the challenge, church. Listen, sometimes people slip and we think we're supposed to stay away. And there's no one there to snatch them out.

[19 : 55] And they eventually end up swimming because they're drowning. Now that's woe is us. Examine the pursuit of the heart so that you can know how to approach the individual.

Paul here is talking about those who knew right, but knowingly, willingly chose to live differently. He said, but not according to the tradition.

Now, in Scripture, sometimes people say, well, we don't need to get so hung up on traditions. Well, sometimes traditions are okay because what traditions do is they build a routine of life. Traditions just build this routine of life and how we should live and how we should act and how we should behave.

And some of them are okay. We don't need to say that traditions are the idols that we're always going to fall down and worship, but we need to understand that sometimes traditions are okay. Paul said, I've given you a tradition, a manner of life in which you should live, but yet there are some people who say, well, I don't want to do that.

I want Jesus, but I want to live like this. I want his benefits of salvation, but I want to live for myself. I want his promise, but I don't want his presence because I'm not going to discipline my life that way, Paul.

[21 : 17] I'll bear his name in eternity, but I'm going to live for my name down here. Paul says, for that person to have nothing to do with them. Why? What does scripture, you know, when you read the book of Leviticus, I know that's probably most of your favorite book.

If I ask you, what's your favorite book of the Old Testament? Somebody out, Leviticus, that's mine, and I know you're so excited, but what's the theme of Leviticus? Be holy as I am holy, says the Lord. It is holiness, right? And the reason we get so carried away is that all these laws and all these rituals and all these sacrifices and all these things that are pointing to Christ and they just seem so confusing, but you know there is one sin, one sin, in the midst of that entire book in which there is no sacrifice for.

It is the high-handed sin. And the Word of God says there is no sacrifice for that. I mean, you can kill someone, there's an atonement there.

You can defile something, you can be unclean, there's an atonement there. You can mess up in such a horrendous nature and there's an atonement there. But for the high-handed sin, there is no sacrifice.

Well, what is a high-handed sin? The high-handed sin is I know you are God and I know what you said, but I don't care. And I'm gonna do it my way anyway.

[22 : 37] God says, I can't help you there. Why? Because you've put yourself on the throne and you have assumed the prominence of his position.

And the pursuit of your heart is self. And we can't have that. Paul says, for that individual, stay away from. Well, how do we know here what he's speaking to are those people who said, well, if Christ is coming again, then I'm gonna live it up until he comes and I'm not gonna worry about working.

We know in context that these people just refuse to work. There's kind of a wordplay here. He says, they are not working, but they're busy bodies. So literally, the word is saying, they are not busy at work, but they're busy in everybody else's business.

They should be laboring with their hands, but they're laboring in everybody's homes. Now, these are not people with physical impossibilities. They're not people with handicaps.

They're not people who cannot do this. These are able-bodied individuals just said, he's coming again. I'm just gonna sit back and take it easy. And when I'm hungry, the church will feed me. When I'm hungry, you people will take care of me.

[23 : 48] When I have a need, we're all to share one another's concerns, right? We ought to have all things in common. The book of Acts, Acts chapter two and three and following. And we ought to be there. And since we're gonna have everything in common, hey, what's yours is mine.

Now, I don't have anything to give to you, but what's yours is mine and what's mine is really supposed to be yours anyway. So I'm just gonna take it easy. And I'm just gonna wait until he

comes again. Paul says, don't take care of that person.

Don't take care of that person. Now, this is something your pastor had to learn. I am now 20 plus years in the ministry. Actually, October 15th, 2005 was my official ordination day of pastor.

October 15th, 2005. I started pastoring December 2004, but they didn't ordain me. I guess they wanted to see if I was gonna make it or see if I was worth ordination. I don't know. I was licensed in 2004 and they didn't ordain me until much time after that.

So it'd been some time. But anyway, so I've had a lot of time here. But what I did is I had to learn, scripture says, give to those who ask, right?

[25 : 00] If someone asks you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to whoever asks. But it says to be wise as serpents and gentle as doves. You know one of the hardest lessons I had to learn is that everybody that calls the church doesn't have a legitimate need.

Everybody that asks doesn't have a legitimate need. He said, pastor says, give to those who ask. I did for a while and then they just kept on asking. Or I'd say this, I tell you what, let me meet you somewhere and I got a job for you to do.

You know the biggest cussing I ever took on the phone? I was pastor in a church in Normandy, Tennessee. Population, a hundred people in Normandy, Tennessee.

I had a guy call me from Cookville, Tennessee and cuss me out because I wouldn't pay his light bill. I said, man, you know how many churches there are between me and you? You probably called every one of them and wore them all out.

I'm not gonna do it. And he called me everything under the sun. I said, well, that's okay. I'll take it because you're in Cookville. You don't even know where I'm at. You just found this church number. That's okay. But listen, we have to have a discerning spirit and I felt bad for a while until Paul showed me if a man doesn't work, he doesn't eat.

[26 : 17] Because sometimes hunger is a good motivating factor. And we need to let people be hungry. We do a pretty good job about removing that.

It's not going online. I'm sorry. I'm all over the internet. I probably get blasted. It's okay. We do a pretty good job making sure nobody's hungry. There was a time when the church would let people be hungry if they wanted to be hungry.

But now we got to go to the third thing because why? What's the purpose? He said, that seems so unloving.

That seems so unwelcoming. But what's the purpose for it? Look at what Paul says. He says, I want them to work quietly. Don't even go around telling everybody you're working.

Just go work quietly, eat your own bread, do your own business. You know, you're okay. If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person. Again, this is a willing rebellion against the teaching of Scripture and do not associate with him.

[27 : 23] Now, this is a brother and he tells us why. So that he will be put to shame. So that he will be put to shame. What is Paul saying?

He said, the reason we're doing this is not so that we would shame them, but so that they would feel the weight of their own choices.

He said, well, pastor, it tells us in the book of Galatians to bear one another's burdens. You're right. Have you read the rest of that verse?

It says to bear one another's burdens and each one is to bear his own burden. In the English translation, it seems confusing, but the best way to explain it is like this.

Carry one another's boulders, but each man should carry his own lunchbox. If you got a boulder on you and you need help, I'll help you out. But don't ask me to carry your lunchbox because that's yours.

[28 : 30] That's your weight. I'm not going to ask you to carry my, I'll carry my wife's, but I ain't carrying yours because that's your weight.

Now, if you have a rock setting upon you and you cannot pick it up, then I am compelled and even called to get underneath that rock with you and help you pick it up. That's your boulder, that's your burden.

But if it's a weight that you can bear on your own, then friend, for lack of a better way of saying it, don't tie the church up in carrying weights that you can carry.

And now that's not mean. That's just faithfulness. And Paul says we do it so that people can feel their shame.

Have you ever messed up so bad that the Holy Spirit brings this conviction upon you and you know you're wrong and the only thing you can do is go fall on your face before a holy God and confess that wrong and repent of that wrong and turn to him and say, Lord, restore me.

[29:40] That's shame and that's a good shame. Paul says we want sorrow that produces godliness. Second Corinthians, he answers that man he gave over to Satan. He says sufficient is the suffering that that individual has born.

Restore him to the fellowship. Why? Because he has made sorrowful for a moment and it's led to godliness. We do not want sorrow that is an excess. That is, once they are broken, he says then restore them.

And if all it was about was proving a point, Paul just said, keep him outside the church. He said we just want to have the weight of their guilt rest upon them so that we can see repentance. Why? Because the name of Christ is worth it.

It's the standard of the calling. He says so that he would bear his own shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Elsewhere in scripture it tells us that we ought to correct with gentleness. Correct with gentleness.

[30:49] I know who I am and I know my personality. I know that if someone was to come to me and bring something against me, I had to learn as I got older not to always respond immediately.

Sometimes I need to take a few moments to breathe because I'm just going to be quite frank. What normally and naturally comes out of my mouth because of my personality is not always gentle.

I'm not always the most compassionate individual, especially if I find the situation offensive. But the word of God tells me that my correction ought to be with gentleness.

Do I fail in that? Yes, absolutely. I mess up. But that does not excuse my responsibility. Why?

Because it is a brother or sister in Christ and eternally we will be stationed beside them. God may so ordain that be the very individual you're standing beside around the throne singing his praises for eternity.

[31:59] And wouldn't it be hard to be so situated beside that brother or sister and in your mind be thinking, well, I didn't think they were going to be here.

We ought to do it with gentleness because the purpose is restoration. Not shame. Not separation. The purpose is restoration.

If you're going to go to a brother or sister, if you're going to even separate yourself from a brother or sister, then make sure you're not separate from them in the throne room of the kingdom for you're trying to restore this individual to the fellowship for the glory of the name because if their fall brings shame to the name of Christ, how much more glory to the name of Christ will their restoration bring?

The fall of Israel brought shame to the name of Christ. God says, I will restore you for the glory of my name. And if their fall brings shame, their restoration will bring so much more glory.

So we're doing it so that his name is magnified and glorified and we're doing it for the purpose of restoration. But understand the posture of humility that we all stand within and we will be done.

[33:21] Notice the posture. Now may the Lord of peace himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. Each and every one of us stand in need of peace. And we are in continual need of that peace for every circumstance.

The Lord be with you all. Paul, write this greeting with my own hand up until this time a scribe had been transcribing for him. Now he takes the pen and he writes with his own hand. We don't know what the distinguishing mark of his letter is.

Maybe he had sloppy handwriting. Maybe he had beautiful handwriting. We don't know. But he said, this is my handwriting. You've seen it before. This is me writing it. What does he say? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Here is the humility of posture we must assume. Each and every one of us stand in desperate need of his grace. grace. And if I desperately need his grace for my own life then shouldn't I be an agent of his grace in the lives of others.

May the admonition and rebuke and the correction that flows from me be driven by grace not hatred not anger because it's really not about what anybody did to me.

[34:34] And it's not about what anybody did to you. If we're trying to preserve our own reputation and our own name then we will stand in anger.

But if we realize it's for the glory of the name of Christ then we will stand in humility in desperate need of his grace and seeking to be agents of his grace to those around us.

Friend, this is how we should live until he comes again. For his name is worth it. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for the opportunity of gathering together and we come before you in full confession knowing that each and every one of us falls woefully short each and every day.

But Father, may it not be the pursuit of our heart to live an undisciplined life but rather may we be surrendered to you understanding our desperate need of your grace and mercy.

May you be our hope in life and in death and may we encourage those around us to live accordingly as well and we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.