



2 Thessalonians

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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. 2 Thessalonians 3:14

In these words, Paul is working for unity within the body, not division. But by calling for division from sluggards, it is a call for those who need to be withdrawn from to wake up from their slumber, get their act in order, and become productive, compliant members of the church. It must be remembered that the entire discourse here is based on the fact that some in the church had been swayed by a false word concerning the end times (verses 2:1, 2). From that departure, they had become unproductive members of the body, lollygagging around, and interrupting a normal environment of right worship and proper daily life.

Understanding this, he begins the verse with, "And if any man." This is the call for division in hopes of obtaining unity. The reason this is so, is that the person is already divided from the body in a general sense. He is not in accord with the rest, and so there is no point in allowing him to continue to be in fellowship with the church. The reason why he isn't in accord with the rest is because he, as Paul says, "does not obey our word in this epistle."

"This epistle" is based on apostolic authority, derived from Christ Jesus. Therefore, such a person is being disobedient to the word of God. This continues on today because the epistle has found a permanent place in the word of God. Therefore, the command applies just as much today as it did when it was received by the church at Thessalonica. And the instruction given is to "note that person and do not keep company with him."

The word translated as "note" means "to set a mark upon." The individual is to be highlighted as if branded so that we are constantly reminded of his errant ways. Until he is compliant, the note is to remain. It's not enough to say, "Oh, he's not holding to the word, but in this case he has an interesting insight I think you should hear." Instead, he is to be noted, and to be completely ignored.

As seen above, the main thrust of the letter concerns adhering to the word of God concerning end times. It is a call to not speculate on what belongs to the Lord alone (see Acts 1:7 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1). As this is disobedience to the words of Jesus, and the words of Paul (who is Jesus' representative), we are to not keep company with date setters. We are not to watch their videos on YouTube, and we are not to attend their conferences, if applicable. Instead, we are to remain productive members of the church, not idle speculators wasting precious time which should be directed towards attaining spiritual maturity.

Paul's words, however, are certainly all-encompassing. Anyone who is not obedient to the words of his epistles – regardless of the infraction – is to be kept away from. Though the words here are centered on end-times date-setters, they must also pertain to all flagrant ignoring of church-age doctrine. He then finishes up with an explanation of why he commands this with, "that he may be ashamed." In the coming verse, he will further define this, but for now, the intent is one of correction.

Rapture date setters shouldn't be applauded for their diligence in trying to determine when the rapture will be. They should be shunned for being an embarrassment on the body. Such is true with any infraction. A brother who is sexually immoral is to be expelled from the body because he is bringing disgrace upon the name of Christ, and his actions are harmful to those who may think it is otherwise OK to act in this way. Such things should not be. The place to find out what is and what is not acceptable is the word of God. When it is not adhered to, action must be taken to restore order and to maintain holiness.

Life application: Some people seem to be beyond shame. They make stuff up out of their own heads, and they misuse Scripture willingly in order to appear super-religious. Whether they will acknowledge their infractions or not, we are given our orders – keep ourselves away from such people. Don't get caught up in that which is misdirected. Instead, grow in sound theology, and hold fast to the word of God!

Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother. 2 Thessalonians 3:15

The Greek begins with "and," not "yet." There is no thought of bitterness or unkindness in Paul's words already spoken, or which he now writes. Instead, this is a saving measure towards the wayward brother. Using the proper conjunction "and" shows that not keeping company with this person is actually an act of brotherly kindness. It is intended to correct his incorrect conduct and hopefully bring him back to proper conduct.

Understanding this, Paul says, "And do not count *him* as an enemy." What is occurring here is Christian discipline, not warfare. This person is not holding to sound doctrine. He is misusing Scripture, or has been misled concerning Scripture, and has come to faulty conclusions about

an issue. This, in turn, has led him to lollygag around and not working. Such a person isn't to be treated as an enemy, but rather as a misdirected brother. In order to correct him, he is not to be associated with, but at the same time, he isn't to be treated like someone who is actually hostile to the faith. Rather, we are to "admonish *him* as a brother."

Admonish means to correct, counsel, or exhort. We are to urge such people to turn and look for God's best in their lives. Rapture date-setting doesn't qualify. One misses out on life when they spend all their time speculating about the next prophetic event to occur. Proper work habits are interrupted, family relationships suffer, and other people are brought into the same inane paths of futile speculation. None of this should occur, and such people are to be properly admonished, as brothers, to give up this avenue and pursue sound doctrine.

Life application: With the UNFRIEND option on Facebook, it is pretty easy to just cut people off without a care. This is necessary at times, but it can also be harmful as well. We need to ensure that we only take such measures towards other Christians if they are truly disruptive, or passing on heretical ideas. Otherwise, we should just admonish them to pursue right doctrine, and avoid otherwise commenting on their incorrect posts about the next rapture date or "sign in the sky." Always attempt to use Christian courtesy when dealing with your fellow brethren.

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord *be* with you all. 2 Thessalonians 3:16

Paul has given multiple commands and exhortations since verse 6. Now, he attaches a benediction to these by saying, "Now may the Lord of peace Himself..." He has been speaking of withdrawing from those who are disorderly. Now as a prayer that such will resolve this unhappy situation, he calls on the "Lord of peace." This phrase is unique in all of his writing. Elsewhere he says, "God of peace, such as in Romans 15:33 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Thus, we have another implicit reference to the Godhead, ascribing to Jesus what was previously ascribed to God. This probably stems from Isaiah's use of the term "Prince of peace" in Isaiah 9:6.

It is Christ Jesus who provides the peace of God. It is a peace which is more than just quiet, but wholeness of heart and soundness of mind. It is also the peace that extends to harmony between people. Paul asks that this fullness of peace be given to those at Thessalonica. As he says it, "always in every way." In adhering to the commands and exhortations, along with all of the other apostolic instruction, this will be possible. Obedience to the word of God is what will bring this about in their lives.

In completion of the verse, he then adds in, "The Lord *be* with you all." This petition hearkens back to Matthew 28:20 where the Lord promised to be with his people always. In obedience to the word of the Lord, there is found the comfort of the Lord. How often people say, "I feel like the Lord's presence isn't with me lately." More often than not, it is because there is some deficiency in their own walk.

The Lord has promised, Paul has petitioned, and the only thing to keep either from being effective must then be from our side, not the Lord's. If we are walking obediently, and yet we still do not feel the Lord with us, then we need to draw near to the Lord who is already there. In Hebrews 10:22, we are admonished to "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." If the Lord seems distant, let us follow these words and correct the problem from our end. He has never left us!

Life application: If our spiritual walk is dry and barren, or when we feel that the Lord is distant, let us return to the word. Let us remember that He has given His promise to never leave us, and to never forsake us. With that in mind, let us then draw near to the One who is right there. Open those spiritual eyes and direct them to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

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

2 Thessalonians 3:17

"This salutation of Paul with my own hand," tells us that until this point he has had a scribe writing the epistle for him. It is at this point that he stopped his narration and said to the scribe something like, "Bentonious, let me have the quill to finish up the letter." Certainly not miffed at all because of writer's-crap, Bentonious probably said, "It's all yours, fine Sir, finish away." The salutation of Paul was intended to keep from happening exactly what did happen, as noted in verses 2:1-2

"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ² not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come."

A hand written salutation from Paul authenticated the letter so that there would be no mistake in whether it was valid or not. This is seen in his next words, "which is a sign in every epistle, so I write." Paul obviously wrote the concluding thoughts of the first letter to them, but he didn't highlight it at that time, but now he is doing so in order to keep from any future possibility of a false letter being received and accepted.

It is known from Galatians 6 that Paul had a unique style of handwriting which was with very large letters (Galatians 6:11). It is generally assumed that this was because he had poor

eyesight. The reasons for this assumption are convincing. His handwriting would be very easy to recognize, and rather hard to forge. This was his mark of authorship, and the letter's mark of authenticity.

Life application: Nowadays, we send many emails, and our social intercourse is often reduced to short, rather impersonal, messages. From time to time, it should be our practice to take a moment and to actually write a note to those we cherish. In this, we go back to a more personal, even intimate, time where associations and friendships were recognized as such.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be with you all.* Amen. 2 Thessalonians 3:18

Paul's closing words here are identical to those of 1 Thessalonians 5:28, except here he adds in the word "all." This is in line with his words of verse 16 of this chapter where he said, "The Lord be with you all." This is especially important because he has censured some of the congregation for being lazy sluggards. Despite this, he has no ill will towards them, and the letter has been intended to correct their sloth. Should they fail, the congregation also has its orders to withdraw from them, but still admonish them as brothers.

Despite the addition of "all," as is in accord with all of his epistles, Paul's closing salutation is a blessing which is a petition for divine favor to be upon his audience. In the Greek, there is a definite article in front of "grace." Quite often English translations will insert "the" for clarity at certain points, but it may not be in the Greek. However, it is here.

"The grace" is different than saying something like, "May grace from the Lord Jesus be with you." Paul is asking for a divine impartation of this attribute of the Lord to rest upon those in Thessalonica (and thus us!) and to sustain them in their walk. It must be then considered that those who are not obedient to the epistle are to be excluded from this petition.

For example, in a similar petition for grace to be bestowed upon the congregation at Corinth, he wrote concerning a disobedient congregant, saying to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Until that person was willing to adhere to the sound instruction of the epistle, his petition for divine grace was most probably not intended for him.

And yet, at the same time, we all fall short of one precept or another. Therefore, it must be considered that it is for those who earnestly strive for adherence to it, even if they do fall short. Such is the nature of grace; undeserved merit. Paul, in one form or another, closes out every one of his epistles with such a note of request for this divine favor. Even the last words of the Bible are very closely aligned with his words here. There John writes -

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.” Revelation 22:21

Finally, Paul closes the letter with “Amen.” In essence, “So let it be.” Paul has petitioned for grace upon his audience, and he then confirms that petition with assured hopes that it will be so.

Life application: The Bible, time and again, asks for an undeserved blessing to be bestowed upon those who pursue it, even if they fall short of what it states. Such is the nature of grace, and such is the nature of our gracious Lord. As you walk along life's highway, take time to contemplate the wondrous grace which has been lavished upon you. And then thank the Lord and praise the Lord for that same grace.