

Persevering In Faithfulness

Call to Worship: Psalm 90:1-6

1st Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

2nd Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

Hymn Insert- *Come People of the Risen King*

Hymn Inset- *Every Promise of Your Word*

Hymn Insert- *By Faith*

Introduction:

Paul has addressed his major theological concern, regarding the return of Christ in Chapter 2. And last week, we have examined his major practical concern, regarding those who were idle and unwilling to work. To this end, we have seen that working is a divine calling, which honors and glorifies God, when those who work, do so, faithfully and unto the Lord.

This morning, we close out this practical concern, which, Lord willing, will bring us to the conclusive benediction of this letter next time.

I. Persevering in Faithfulness

After admonishing those who were idle, through the authority of Jesus Christ, to "work in quietness and eat their own bread," Paul turns his attention back to the church in general, leaving them **two final exhortations**. [Note, Paul reminds them that these commands are given not so much from Paul himself, but on behalf of Jesus Christ, whom he represents as an Apostle - vs. 6 & 12]. [Note: legitimacy of secular retirement, but serve the Lord all the more]

1) "But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing *good*" (vs. 13). Paul knows too well that the temptation to give up and to turn aside to some form of idolatry or sinful practice, is ever present, especially when facing persecution and/or suffering of any kind. And in the case of the Thessalonians, this persecution and suffering was ongoing, with no stated end in view.

And so, Paul exhorts them to persevere in their faithful labors; to not grow weary in doing good. In saying this, he is not being inconsiderate of their sufferings. After all, he could relate very well, as a fellow ongoing sufferer for the gospel. Rather, he wants to exhort them not to allow the sorrow of suffering to lead to despair. He wants them to continue on with the same diligence, recognizing that their labors in the Lord were not in vain, and that the reward was just up ahead. He wants them to continually come back to the big picture, hidden reality, so that they

could endure the brief, physical hardship and pain. And particularly in this context, this would imply continuing to work hard right up to the end, so that they could set an example to those on the outside (in the context of a lazy, idle culture), so that they could avoid being an unnecessary burden to others, and so that they could have something to give to those who were truly in need. And so, while not growing weary in doing good would involve all of their Church and Christian activities, (in their context) it especially related to working hard, living a quiet and godly life, and waiting for the return of Christ in these kinds of ways, without allowing His imminent return to motivate them unto being idle or lazy.

2) "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. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (vs. 14-15).

Finally then, Paul gives additional information concerning the command that he gave in verse 6. [Read verse 6]. Here, we find a form of church discipline, which is geared toward addressing those who do not cooperate with Paul's teaching here, particularly related to working. When he states, "Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother," he is distinguishing this form of discipline from the discipline of excommunication, where the unrepentant sinning brother/sister is to be put out of the church and treated like a tax collector.

Those who sin in this particular way are not to be excommunicated (unless this sin leads to other greater sins), but rather they are not to be enabled by the brethren. They are to be admonished and corrected. They are to feel the want and need of their own unwillingness to work. They are to be isolated in some sense ("Do not keep company with him..."), so that they will be ashamed of what they are doing, with the hope that they will be driven to walk in an orderly fashion, working, in accordance with God's will and design for them. Such, who would unnecessarily burden the church (after having been verbally admonished) are to be noted and withdrawn from, so as not to enable or encourage them in their disorderliness. And yet, they are to be regarded and corrected as a brother, rather than excommunicated and treated as an unbeliever/enemy.

These then are the final two exhortations that Paul gives in this letter. "You yourselves persevere in being faithful and doing good, and withdraw from those who do not do so, in

accordance with the commands, which we have given you in this letter." Next time, Lord willing, we will close out this letter, by considering Paul's final benediction.

II. Closing Thoughts and Applications

Let us spend the remainder of our time then, considering a few relevant closing thoughts and applications:

1) Let us be exhorted to ensure that we not only embrace the doctrines given in the Scriptures, but that we also embrace the proper application of those doctrines, in accordance with the will of God and not our own rationale. For example, at times, you will find those who acknowledge and profess the truths concerning predestination and election, processing and applying those truths in a way that contradicts the very means that God uses to save sinners in the proclamation of the gospel, and the call for sinners to repent and to believe into the Lord Jesus Christ. Such people would say, "Well, God will save whomever He chooses to save. Sinners cannot believe of their own free will because they are dead in sin. So, we cannot command dead sinners to repent and believe the gospel." What such people fail to realize is that the proclamation of the gospel (the call for sinners to repent and believe into Christ) is the very means that God uses to bring the lost out of darkness and into the light of Christ. Now, they would recognize this if they allowed God's Word to dictate both their theology and the application of that theology, in keeping with the teaching and practice of the Apostles and the early church. Understanding the doctrine of election was never meant to be a means of eclipsing the calling and responsibility for sinners to repent and believe the gospel.

Likewise, recognizing that the return of Christ may be imminent (He can return at any time) and that this world is not our home, does not negate the responsibility that we have, to work and to faithfully live, even the temporal life that lies in front of us, as an example to others and for the glory of Christ. Even if we absolutely knew that Christ was returning at 3pm tomorrow (which, of course, no one knows the day or hour), we would still be called to fulfill the responsibilities that we have before us today, in such a way that Christ would be seen in our diligent and faithful labors. And so, let us, in so far as we are able, look both, for the theology of

Scripture and the proper processing and applying of that theology, in the Scriptures, lest we compromise one thing by improperly rationalizing the other.

2) Let us recognize that there are different discipline options given to the church, which ought to be exercised in accordance with the nature of any particular sin that is committed. Many times, matters of discipline are just not black and white. Getting all of the facts straight, assessing whether genuine repentance is present, working through the steps of Matthew 18, unraveling the nature of the offense committed...etc, all take prayer, time, counsel and wisdom. And, it is better to err on the side of grace, when you are not sure of what to do at any given time.

Here, in this letter, we find that a particular sin is present in the body, which does not call for excommunication. However, there are instructions to help bring the offender to the place where they are ashamed of what they are doing. And that involves withdrawing from the individual, not supporting them in their idle living, and avoiding providing them with a context where they can be a busybody. They are to be admonished as a brother, but not treated as an enemy. And yet, with other sins, if repentance does not take place, individuals are to be put out of the church, delivered over to Satan, and treated like an enemy or an outsider. And so, there are, at times, varying options on how to best discipline a sinning brother or sister in Christ, depending upon the nature and extent of the offense. All in all, the spiritual wellbeing of the church, the spiritual wellbeing of the individual, and above all, the glory of Christ, must be weighed into the overall equation, when seeking to exercise biblical church discipline.

3) Let us be exhorted and encouraged to not grow weary in doing good. The Thessalonians were enduring a marathon of persecutions and sufferings, and surely, the temptation would ever be present for them to fizzle down into a pit of despair. And they are given to us as an example of patience and perseverance and love, so that we might not grow weary, as we battle through the trials that have been ordained for our good and for the glory of God. Paul puts it so well, in Galatians 6:9-10, when he states:

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

Do not grow weary. Do not let an attitude of uselessness infiltrate your mind and your heart, as if, your labors in Christ are in any way vain. Continue to persevere in being faithful to God, and in doing good to all, and especially to the brethren (the household of faith). Keep sowing seed, knowing with absolute certainty, that in due time (at a very specific time, appointed by God), you will reap. Sowing takes a lot of work, and it takes a lot of faith, because you can't see the crop in any immediate sense. You have to trust that God will bring in that crop at the time of reaping. And brethren, what you sow in Christ, will never be wasted. Keep sowing! Keep serving! Keep investing in the Kingdom of God, and if you see little or nothing in this life, know for sure, that glory will bring in the ultimate fruit of your labors! Don't lose heart. Don't grow weary. Press on! That is the ultimate message of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, for us.

4) But, oh friend, if you are not a Christian this morning, you must understand that you yourself are also sowing unto a harvest. But, any harvest sown apart from Christ, is a harvest of the flesh, which has been poisoned by sin. And that will only bring destruction. There will be a time of reckoning, where all will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account for everything that has been done in this body. Don't waste this short life investing in a harvest of wood, hay and stubble.

You have been created by God and for God and His glory. But your sin nature, and your sins that spring out of that nature, have caused you to fall far short of His glory. If you will but repent of your sins today, and call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus in truth, God will save you and give you a productive life unto glorifying His worthy Name. And in the end; just beyond the gateway of this brief life, you will live with God and His people forever, where there are joys forevermore, to be enjoyed in His glorious presence! Don't die in your sins, friends. Don't die condemned in your sin. Seek the Lord, while He may be found, right here and now, in the quiet place of prayer in your own heart. Seek Him now, before it is too late. May God open your heart to His reality, so that you will find grace and life in His Son!

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25